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KUBERTS:
Interview with a dynasty

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People who love what they do are a rare and wonderful breed.

Take for example the Kuberts, alphabetically Adam, Andy, and Joe. These are people who represent the *best* of the talent pool, and they are artists whose enthusiasm shows in every line they put to the page. And every year, through the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, this dynasty passes the torch to dozens of new and talented student.

Take for example Ken Lashley, the newcomer who is taking on the penciling challenges of **EXCALIBUR.** Ken recently traveled south from Canada to visit the Marvel offices, and it was obvious to anyone who met him that Ken's excitement is a vast creative well, just waiting to be tapped.

Take for example Sergio Aragones, one of the warmest and most genuine persons in comics. There is nothing that surpasses the *passion* Sergio puts into his creations, including **GROO THE WANDERER** and *Mighty Magnor.*

So many of the men and women who work on the Marvel titles do so because they love that outlet for their imaginations, that opportunity to communicate their energy to the audience via tales of unparalleled adventure. And they are people who *respect* their audience, and so strive to make sure that they deliver the excitement that the readers expect in regular, dependable doses. That's why you find new Marvel releases on the shelves *every week,* as promised.

When the deadlines slip, everyone involved works *that much harder* to get back on schedule. (Further proof they *must* love their work — it certainly isn't for the easy hours!)

And you, dear readers, should count yourselves fortunate, for you are the targets of all this creative energy. Everything the Kuberts, Lashleys, Aragoneses, and their peers do, is for you. And that's the way it should be.

— Steve Saffel

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Up Front

TWO-FISTED PUNISHMENT

To celebrate the **PUNISHER:** "Suicide Run" crossover, scheduled to kick off in November, and the deadly ramifications that will stem from it, Marvel Age will present the **PUNISHER ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE** in December. This special publication will detail the plans Marvel has for Frank Castle in 1994, and will feature profiles of **PUNISHER** creators from the last twenty years, including Larry Hama, Chuck Dixon, Hugh Haynes, Gary Kwapisz, John Buscema, Dan Abnett, and Andy Lanning.

The **PUNISHER ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE** will also explore the reasons for the contempt Frank Castle inspires in the rest of the heroes in the Marvel Universe, while providing a look at the current status of former **PUNISHER** foes and supporting players in a feature called "Where are They Buried?" Also featured is a comprehensive history of the Punisher, which traces his origin and prison record. An insight from **PUNISHER** Editor Don Daley will reveal some of the reasons for this vigilante's enduring appeal.

Meanwhile, the second annual **PUNISHER HOLIDAY SPECIAL** is scheduled for November, sporting a cover penciled by Bill Sienkiewicz. Produced by a variety of creators, this 64-page book includes several self-contained stories, one of which depicts Frank visiting members of the Underworld to drop off gifts they'll absolutely die over.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

Venom will celebrate the holidays with a new three-issue limited series scheduled to debut in December. **VENOM: THE ENEMY WITHIN** is written by Bruce **(KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE, ARENA)** Jones and penciled and inked by Bob **(SPIDER-MAN, PUNISHER)** McLeod. **VENOM: THE ENEMY #1** will arrive in stores with an eye-catching cover detailing Venom's frightening eyes and teeth with glow in the dark ink.

The series puts Venom, the Demogoblin, and Morbius, the Living Vampire in a three-way melee in this tale of demons trying to take over San Francisco.

NEW COSTUMES AND SOLO FLIGHTS

On the heels of **SPIDER-WOMAN**, two other members of the **AVENGERS WEST COAST** will star in their own four-issue limited series beginning in November.

SCARLET WITCH will introduce a newly bold, self-assured Witch, clad in an all-new costume! The series will be written by the **PUNISHER** team of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, who are breaking new ground in their treatment of Magneto's favorite redheaded daughter. And, according to Editor Nel Yomtov, penciler John Higgins' first work for Marvel is "spectacular, really something to see."

SCARLET WITCH starts off with the Avengers West Coast compound under attack by demon forces, while the Witch suffers from nightmares that compel her to seek out Agatha Harkness in a Salem-like community in the Northeast.

The Witch's teammate, Hawkeye, is also leaving the West Coast temporarily for a limited series of his own. Hawkeye had a tough go of it with the death of his wife in **AVENGERS WEST COAST #100** and seeks the peace and quiet of the Canadian wilderness to come to terms with his loss. Whether he likes it or not, he's in for another adventure when he stumbles upon a genetic experiment gone wrong and War Machine steps in to help him confront the perpetrators! Hawkeye will also sport a brand-new costume in this hard-hitting series by **PUNISHER** writer Chuck Dixon and penciler Scott Kolins.

WHO KNOWS WHO

Marvel UK plans to celebrate Doctor Who's 30th anniversary with the publication of a special 4-issue limited series scheduled to begin in December. Entitled **DOCTOR WHO: AGE OF CHAOS**, it is the first **DOCTOR WHO** comic produced for the American audience and written by someone who has experienced the Doctor's time-travelling adventures firsthand. Writer Colin Baker is known to British television audiences as the actor who portrayed the sixth incarnation of the Doctor. John M. Burnes is penciling the series.

Baker, who is also known in Britain for his roles in *Hamlet*, *MacBeth*, and *War and Peace*, gave his insights into the Doctor's character to the **DOCTOR WHO MAGAZINE**. "I've always said the Doctor must be physical," he said, "which sometimes means physical action. If you are going to genuinely frighten someone. . .you've got to have a real fear that you're going to hurt them. . .

What I want is for people not to think, 'This is how he'll react in this situation.' One time, [Doctor Who] may be very lethargic and allow himself to be caught, the next he'll do something extraordinary."

In **DOCTOR WHO: AGE OF CHAOS**, Baker will pit the sixth Doctor against barbarians and dinosaurs as he embarks on a quest to fulfill a prophecy and find his old companion, Peri.

FINGER ON THE PULSE

A one-shot comic adaptation of **TSR'S** popular *Dragon Strike* role-playing game is scheduled for release in December.

All six of the holograms that commemorated the 30th Anniversary of the **X-MEN** will be collected in the **X-MEN HOLOGRAM SET** slated to arrive in stores in December.

December also sees the publication of the **MAX YEARBOOK**, a 32-page comic with a Polaroid hologram on the cover. This special issue will showcase the assorted X-Men and Avengers art used during the year-long celebration of the teams' 30th anniversaries.

SPIDER-MAN: KING FEATURES #0, a 32-page album, will kick off the first-ever tie-in between a newspaper strip and a comic book. At press time it was determined that the book will reprint either Spidey's origin or his first adventure by Stan Lee and John Romita, Sr. It will also include blank pages for clipping and pasting crossover installments from the newspaper strip by Stan Lee and Larry Lieber.

LIAM SHARP DELIVERS THE GOLD

Marvel UK announced the publication of **DEATH'S HEAD II GOLD**, a 48-page quarterly starring the popular cyborg, with the premiere issue slated for release in November. Popular artist Liam Sharp is writing and penciling **DEATH'S HEAD II GOLD #1**, which, like subsequent issues, will include self-contained stories.

Writer Dan (**FORCE WORKS**) Abnett and penciler Bryan (**MyS-TECH WARS**) Hitch have already signed to do issues #2 and 4, and Sharp will return to write and draw the third issue.

The entire **DEATH'S HEAD II GOLD** series will arrive in stores with embossed gold foil covers. The first issue will be published to coincide with premieres of two new **DEATH'S HEAD II**-related limited series, **DEATH WRECK** and **DEATH METAL**.

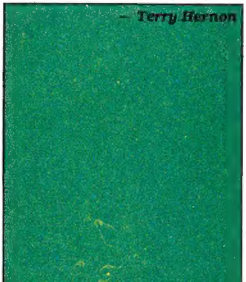
Written by Simon Furman and penciled by John Royle, **DEATH METAL** is the story of the cyborg Marvel UK representatives call "the ultimate killing machine." Created by Dr. Evelyn Necker, the woman behind Death's Head II, Death Metal is free of the design flaws that impair her better-known cyborg. The result is plenty of hard-hitting action.

DEATH WRECK concerns another of Necker's creations, the Death's Head II prototype she fashioned using half a cyborg, a quarter of a car, a quarter of a man, and the brain of a New Yorker who had a serious drinking problem. This series, written by Craig Houston and penciled by Stewart Johnson, is set in the year 2099 and is crammed with adventure as Death Wreck goes from battle to bottle to battle again.

Both four-issue limited series will premiere with embossed foil covers. **DEATH'S HEAD II #14** will also sport an embossed foil cover to commemorate the arrival of the three new companion titles.

A MARVEL/DISNEY COLLABORATION

Marvel has completed an agreement with the Walt Disney Company giving Marvel the go-ahead to produce several new titles based on Disney concepts, beginning with **THE THREE MUSKETEERS**, a two-issue limited series that has already begun, written by Bobbi J. G. Weiss with art by Dan Spiegle, coinciding with the film slated for Thanksgiving release. Marvel is also currently joining with Gladstone Comics to distribute many of the classic Disney characters, including Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, to the newsstand.



Mark's REMARKS

Hands up if you've heard of the New Universe, Marvel's first attempt at concocting an alternate to its "mainstream" universe? Good — about half of you. Now if you want to see it back? One, two, three. . . thirteen?!?

Now you know why it's not been heard from for so long. There just wasn't what you'd call a mandate to bring back such folk as Justice and the DP7.

As one of the authors of the New Universe (I thought of the famed White Event, borrowing it from an unpublished "visual novel" I wrote back in high school), and one of Marvel's policy wonks at the time of its demise, I advocated a clean demise for the New U and its characters. There was a movement afloat at the time to simply incorporate or resurrect the best of the New U'ers in the mainstream Marvel Universe, but I was dead set against it, issuing a memo restricting all New U usage. My reasoning was that we took such pains to keep the New U discrete from the Marvel U during its lifetime — ensuring that the fundamental operating premises were so separate from one another — that it would be difficult to make a case that the two universes were in the same multiverse.

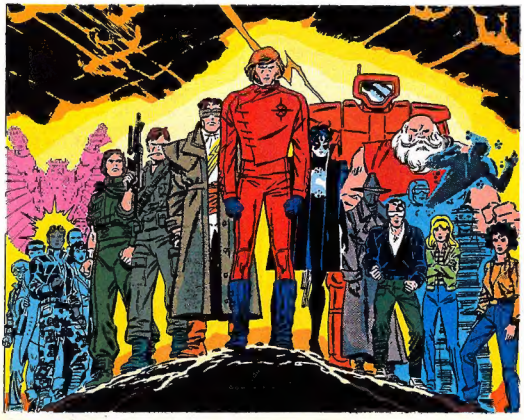
Just because the New U was dead, I didn't want to see its remains unnecessarily disturbed. But, as the publishing record will show, it was *me* who featured New U characters in a Marvel U title for the first time, and who laid the seeds for incorporating the Starbrand into the Marvel U.

What am I: a hypocrite, a person with one set of rules governing the rest of the world and another for myself? Well, recently, I was brought up before Marvel's dreaded Continuity Court on such charges and, in interests of accuracy, I am providing you with a transcript of the proceedings:

Bailiff: The multiversal Continuity Court is now in session, the right honorable Judge DeFalco presiding. All rise.
DeFalco: Siddown.
Bailiff: Case **10025A:** The People of the New Universe vs. Mark Gruenwald.
DeFalco: The accused is charged wit' willfully breakin' his own edict of **8-8-90**, "Until furt'er notice, no New Universe character or concept shall be brought inta the Marvel Universe in any shape, manner, or form, nor shall any Marvel Universe character be permitted ta go to th' New Universe wit'out th' express permission of th' Greater Continuity Council." How does the accused plead?
Defense: Not guilty, yuronner.
DeFalco: Proceed awready.
Bailiff: Mark Gruenwald, please take the stand. Do you solemnly swear to tell the fiction, the whole fiction, and nothing but the fiction, so help you Stan?
Gruenwald: I do.
Prosecution: Mr. Gruenwald, were you not the principal edict-issuer of the New Universe Prohibition Edict?
Gruenwald: I was.
Prosecution: In your opinion, do edicts apply to the issuer, as well as the rank and file, or does the edict-issuer stand above the law?
Gruenwald: No man stands above the law. Any edict applies to everyone.
Prosecution: Then do you claim to have abided by the 8-8-90 edict?
Gruenwald: Well. . .
Prosecution: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, exhibit A. Mr. Gruenwald, could you identify this item?
Gruenwald: Yeah, it's a copy of **QUASAR #31**.
Prosecution: Do you happen to know who wrote this comic book?
Gruenwald: I did.
Prosecution: Please read, for the record, the blurb that appears on the cover.
Gruenwald: "There's No Escape From the New Universe!"
Prosecution: "New Universe"? And are these not characters who appeared in the title DP7, which you also wrote?
Gruenwald: Yeah, they are. . .that's Dave, and Steph, and that's Captain Manhattan. . .
Prosecution: Ladies and gentlemen, by his own admission, New Universe characters appear in a Marvel Universe title. His guilt is admitted. The prosecution rests.

(The Prosecutor takes his seat.)

Defense: Mr. Gruenwald, what led you to utilize New Universe characters in **QUASAR**?
Gruenwald: Well, in an early issue of **QUASAR**, I had the Living Laser disappear into the Watcher's alternate reality viewing screen. . .
Defense: His **WHAT IF!?** screen?
Gruenwald: Uh, right. Anyway, another writer used the Laser sometime afterwards without even alluding to the incredibly interesting story of how the Laser got back. So I decided to do that story — that LL *diverged* while attempting to go back through the Watcher's portal, and was creating a nuisance among the timelines. The Watcher recruited Quasar to rectify the mess, and Quas ran into big-time trouble.
Defense: What kind?
Gruenwald: A reality where his arch-nemesis, Maelstrom, hadn't died, but fought Thanos for control of the universe. Quas got caught in the crossfire, and was blown away so hard he left this multiverse altogether.
Defense: So you planned for him to end up in the New Universe?
Gruenwald: Not really. I planned for him to land in Mighty Mouse's universe.
Defense: Mighty Mouse?!? *The* Mighty Mouse?*
Gruenwald: Yes! Marvel was doing **MIGHTY MOUSE** at the time and I got permission from Terrytoons, who owned the copyright on MM's universe.
Defense: Quasar* was going to meet Mighty Mouse?!?*
Gruenwald: Yes. . .I've been a Mighty Mouse fan since I was three



or four, and Quasar, being cosmic, was an anything-goes kind of character. But by the time I was ready, **MIGHTY MOUSE** had been canceled and the whole thing fell through. So I was forced to think of another preposterous multiverse Quas could find himself in. That's when I proposed the New Universe.

Defense: Proposed to — ?

Gruenwald: Editor Kelly Corvese. He said "Okay," if I cleared it with the Powers-That-Be. I cleared it with myself and then plotted #31, one of my favorite issues to date.

Defense: Why did you think you could use the New Universe characters with impunity?

Gruenwald: Well, the whole reason behind the edict was I wanted the New Universe to remain unique, one-of-a-kind, and if the characters just became incorporated into the Marvel U without much thought, that would "de-uniquify" them.

Defense: You figured you could avoid that?

Gruenwald: Yes! My story would stress how different the physical laws of the New U were from the Marvel U, and I would show how incredibly difficult it is to travel from the Marvel U to the New U. I knew eventually the temptation would be too great for somebody, and the edict would be forgotten, and the New U heroes would be used, de-uniquifying them. I figured if I did a story reveling in *how* unique and separate the New U was, I could lay the groundwork for future forays and possibly pre-empt de-uniquification.

Defense: So you disobeyed the edict in order to reinforce it!

Gruenwald: Exactly!

Defense: The Defense rests.

Prosecution: Mr. Gruenwald, you say your single use of the New Universe was to prevent its indiscriminate future use?

Gruenwald: Uh, that's right.

Prosecution: So **QUASAR #31** was your sole and single use of any character or concept from the New Universe?

Gruenwald: Ahem, well, not exactly. . . You see, Quasar borrowed the Starbrand from its user in order to acquire the power to jump back into his own multiverse, and I originally figured that the 'Brand had burned itself out in transit. Then I thought "What if it hadn't? What if the most powerful force of another cosmos was suddenly brought into *this* cosmos? And what if the person who got this power was a typical, modern working woman who happened to be Quasar's love interest?" It seemed like there was a lot of grist for compelling stories here, so I cleared it with my editor. . .

Prosecution: . . .who rubber-stamped it if you yourself signed off on it?

Gruenwald: Well. . .

Prosecution: And what about the little Antibody that hitched a ride in Quasar's cape and thumbed his nose at the Watcher at the end of **QUASAR #31**?

Gruenwald: Well, he was so tiny, I didn't think he'd be —

Prosecution: Is he or is he not a character or concept associated with the New Universe?

Gruenwald: He is. . .sir.

Prosecution: *A-hah!*

Gruenwald: I've since done away with him.

Prosecution: So are your flagrant violations finally through?

Gruenwald: Well, I'm doing my best to rid the Marvel U of the Starbrand. It shouldn't be here. It's messing up the balance of power. All other power objects — Infinity gems, Ultimate Nullifiers, Cosmic Cubes, whatever — have been divvied up and accounted for by the Great Conceptual Entities of the Marvel cosmos. The Starbrand's different. No one quite knows what to make of it, but a lot of never-do-wells would like to get their hands on it. See, that was the great paradox of the **STARBRAND** series. On one hand, the Starbrand was the most powerful weapon in the universe, so powerful that everybody in the universe would want it. But it was established that there were no aliens in the New Universe — there was only the world outside your window, where aliens were just tabloid fabrications. So here was a premise that could never be brought to fruition. . .in the New Universe. But in the Marvel Universe — *whoote*!

Prosecution: Don't tell me your motivation is to follow through on an original premise of the New Universe!

Gruenwald: It's true. We've got this twelve-part limited series **STARBLAST** all about a coalition of bad-buttocked aliens who are out to get their hands on the Starbrand in the worst way, and it's all Marvel's space heroes can do to stop them.

Prosecution: So your violations shall continue! Your words convict you. I have no more questions.

Defense: I don't either, unfortunately.

DeFalco: Do you swear ta do no more New Universe crossovers?

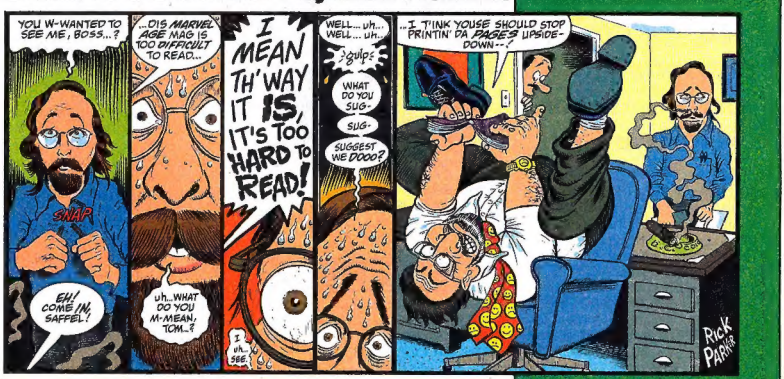
Gruenwald: I promise to take the Starbrand all the way to the ends of the Marvel Universe and beyond. If that involves more edict violations, rest assured I'll do them as right as anybody. What happens from there, who knows?

That's the transcript. Talk about harrowing!

(Oh, did I mention I was both the Defense and Prosecution?)

— Mark Gruenwald

THE BOSSMEN by RICK PARKER


YOU W-WANTED TO SEE ME, BOSS...?
SNAP
EH! COME IN, SAFFEL!
...DIS MARVEL AGE MAG IS TOO DIFFICULT TO READ...
uh...WHAT DO YOU M-MEAN, TOM...?
I MEAN TH' WAY IT IS, IT'S TOO HARD TO READ!
I uh... SEE.
WELL... uh... WELL... uh...
gulps
WHAT DO YOU SUG-
SUG-
SUGGEST WE DOO?
...I THINK YOUSE SHOULD STOP PRINTIN' DA PAGES UPSIDE-DOWN--
RICK PARKER

The Kubert Dynasty

A round-table interview

Think father-and-son power combos. If you're into the Hollywood scene, Kirk and Michael Douglas spring to mind. If you're a baseball fan, the only question is which pair you think of first: all-world Barry and proud pop Bobby, or the Griffeys. The comics industry, meanwhile, has done them one better by producing a rare star *triad*: legend-in-his-own-time Joe Kubert, 67, and his sons Adam, 33, and Andy, 31.

Momentarily setting aside their work on **TOR, WOLVERINE,** and Charles Xavier and company, the Kuberts sat down recently at the *Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art* in Dover, New Jersey, for a round-table discussion with **MARVEL AGE.**

MARVEL AGE: Joe, Marvel readers are familiar with Andy's work on **X-MEN** and Adam's on **SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE,** but you've always been most closely identified with material you've done for **DC.** How did you end up bringing TOR to Epic, and was this a first for you and Marvel?

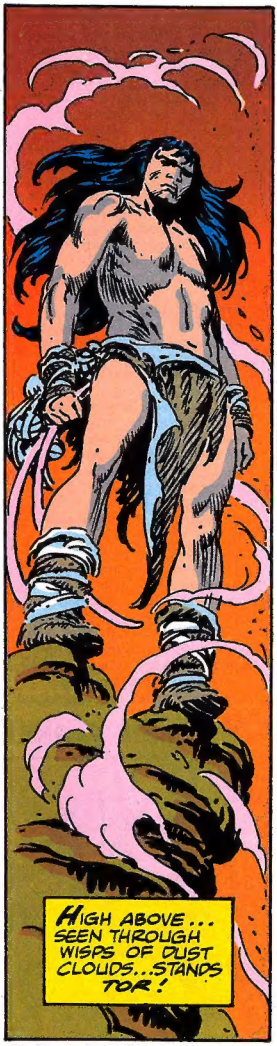
JOE KUBERT: A big reason was that I saw how well Marvel was treating my sons and how happy they were. The last work I'd done for Marvel myself was some innocuous pages way back when it was Timely Comics. But you know, I went to Marvel's last Christmas party and I saw Stan Lee there, after not having seen him in years, and it was like he had found his long-lost brother. He grabbed me and hugged me and said, "You've been away from Marvel too long," which was really very nice. I really appreciated that.

I sold my first piece of work when I was about twelve years old.

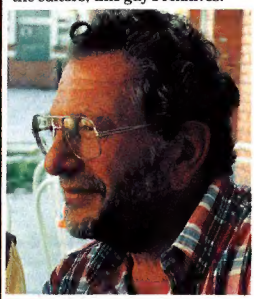
MA: There were quite a few highlights in the interim, of course. How about giving us a chronology?

JOE: I guess the things I'm most heavily identified with are *The Flash, Hawkman,* and *Sgt. Rock. Tarzan* was pretty notable, too. It's hard to put my work in the proper chronology, because I tend not to keep track of which years I worked on specific projects, and I've been in the business for 55 years. I sold my first piece of work when I was about twelve years old.

MA: That's incredible!



JOE: It wasn't really, for the time I got into the business. It was the late '30s, and comic books were just coming into being. And it happened that one of the boys I went to junior high school with was related to the folks who were the originators of the Archie Group. So I made a "portfolio" out of newspaper, went into New York, and brought it up to show to the editors, this guy's relatives.



Joe Kubert

Being as young as I was defrayed any doubts I should have had. My drawings were atrocious, but comic books were ten cents a shot for 64 pages then, and they had to fill the books, so they stuck my material in the back to fill them out. It was an opportunity for me to learn on the job, which I did. I was really very lucky.

MA: Do you think the Kubert family is proof that artistic proficiency is something that can be taught? Or, to resort to a cliche, do you think that that's something people are born with?

ADAM: I think both Andy and I are proof that it's a skill that can be developed. I know I couldn't draw out of my head before I went to my dad's school. I could draw what I saw, but I couldn't figure out drawing figures running toward you or away from you or anything like that. That's something you can definitely learn. And the more you do it, the better you get at it. Going to the school, you put in a lot of time on this. And especially for us, there was no such thing as not turning in our assignments, for obvious reasons.

JOE: That was an understanding when both the boys came to the school. They had expressed a desire to do that—I did not invite or entice them to come.

ADAM [kidding]: Well, that $10,000 at the end was pretty enticing. . .

ANDY: The idea when I was first going through it was to go to the school for a year while I worked in the office. And it just happened that I got into it.

JOE: Andy is an anomaly because—

ADAM: Well, just look at him! [Laughter.]

JOE: Usually guys who come into this kind of profession started to draw perhaps by the time they could hold a pencil — two, three, four years old. Andy didn't start to draw seriously until really about. ..

ANDY: Nineteen or twenty. I took commercial art classes, but nothing like this.

MA: Growing up as Joe's sons, how big a part did comics play in your childhood?

ADAM: I wasn't really into comics. They were always around, but I wasn't a big fan or a collector or anything like that. I didn't think until halfway through college that I'd go into this.

ANDY: I never really got into comics either. Maybe I just took them for granted because my dad always brought piles of them home — all those war comics and Batman comics. I never really appreciated what my dad did until I started learning how to do this myself.

MA: Now that all three of you are established names in comics, is there any sort of competition among you, even in a purely good-natured way?

JOE: Quite the opposite. I see the boys probably once or twice a day, and I'm always interested in looking at their work, and they're interested in looking at mine. And I think the best criticism any of us get is what we lay out among ourselves. I can always find people to say, "Yeah, that looks nice," but we're constantly looking to improve our work, and the kind of reactions that inspire, that come from each other.

Adam Kubert

There may be some competition laying underneath several dozens of layers of stuff, but for the most part, I think it's a good, positive experience for all of us. I know it is for me.

From WOLVERINE #75–a surreal dream scene by Adam Kubert, inked by Mark Farmer.

That's what comics are all about: reading a story and getting 20 minutes of enjoyment from it, forgetting about whatever daily problems you might have. . .

ADAM: More than competition, seeing what they're doing pushes me to do the best I can. I mean, coming into my dad's office and looking at the TOR pages over there, it's. . .

ANDY: It's depressing! [Laughter.]

MA: Do you see significant differences in your approaches to storytelling?

JOE: I think, as is true with most artists, each of our approaches is quite different.

ADAM: Oh, I don't know how different they really are. When you get through all the fluff, I try to do what you do, which is to tell stories as dramatically as possible.

JOE: But I think it's more than that. There's a manner of designing the page, a manner of incorporating what's interesting to you in a way that passes it on to the reader. . .I think in those areas there are really heavy variations. Although basically,

A dramatic scene by Andy Kubert and Matt Ryan— from the "Bloodties" crossover.

of course, we're all trying to do figures that look right to us, compositions that look interesting, and sequential art that reads easily when the graphics and text are combined.

ADAM: The most important thing is for the reader to be able to follow the story. That's what comics are all about: reading a story and getting 20 minutes of enjoyment from it, forgetting about whatever daily problems you might have, and then putting the comic away.

JOE: I think Andy's approach also is to tell the story making the page look interesting, but his style really generates a lot more detail than Adam's does. And Adam's is fairly complicated itself. My intent constantly is to simplify, simplify, simplify.

ANDY: That obviously has a lot to do with the stuff we work on too. As super hero material, **X-MEN** has to have a certain look to it. **TOR** involves a totally different approach, and if I was doing that, it would probably look a lot different than my **X-MEN** stuff. It all depends on what you're drawing.

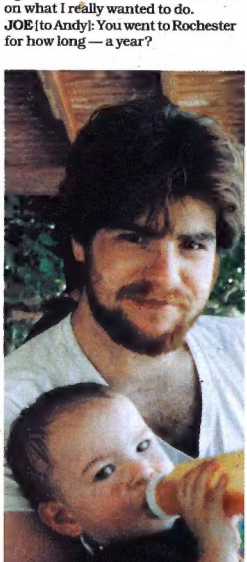
JOE: That's true — it's colored by that as well.

MA: Adam and Andy, how did you end up at your dad's school?

JOE: They begged!

ADAM: I begged, pleaded, and finally he opened the door. Seriously, though, when I went to school for medical illustration [at Rochester Institute of Technology, which Andy also attended], I went because I was interested in both science and art. I put the two together, got accepted for it, and I went. But all through school, I was doing volunteer posters for concerts, loading up my sketchbooks, and doing things out of my head. Since I was spending my spare time doing this really creative work, after a while I thought, "Why fight it?" It was time to concentrate on what I really wanted to do.

JOE [to Andy]: You went to Rochester for how long — a year?



Andy and Sam Kubert

ANDY: I went for six months, for packaging design.

ADAM: Yeah, Crest boxes. [Laughter.]

JOE: It was completely mechanical.

ANDY: Just heavy on design.

JOE: And Adam's courses involved a lot of rendering — tissue and bone and whatever it was he was working from.

ADAM: You had to draw accurately, which helped as far as learning anatomy goes. I had a course, "Gross Anatomy," where we were side by side with medical students dissecting cadavers. It was pretty weird — I'm in a room with like thirteen dead people, and I'm there with a sketchbook.

MA: Pretty inexpensive modeling fees, no doubt.

ADAM [laughing]: Yeah, and they stayed still for me.

JOE: It's important to note, though, that when both the boys decided they wanted to come to my school, we had an understanding. I knew I'd have them in a number of classes I myself was teaching, and that it could present a conflict with the other students. So the understanding was —

ADAM: Don't tell 'em who we are!

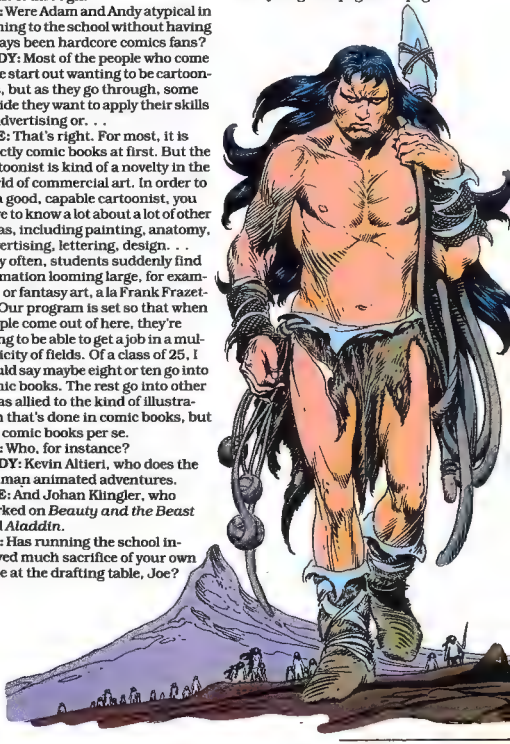
JOE: They had to do the work. Other students in the class might not bring in an assignment when they were supposed to, and to a certain degree, anyway, I'd accept their reason. Not so with these two — they were living at home. To avoid any perception of favoritism, I couldn't accept anything less than the best from them. I said the moment anything like that started happening, they were out, that would be the end of it.

ADAM: One time we skipped an assignment for a Who concert. [He winces at the memory.] There was definitely some embarrassment.
MA: What compelled you to start the school, Joe? Benevolence? If corny analogies didn't offend us, we'd almost wonder if Andy doesn't have some real-life inspiration to draw on when he's giving us the view from Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. . .

From the Joe Kubert sketchbook—the *Marsyas supplicle*, drawn during a 1990 visit to the Louvre.

JOE: Well, I don't know about that. Although both Adam and Andy have had a little fun with me by doing caricatures of me in their work. No, I started the school 18 years ago, simply because I felt there was a need. Also, my wife and I have five kids, three older ones besides Adam and Andy who weren't inclined toward comics, and at that point they were all out of the house and on their own. So we felt that, if it didn't inhibit my career, it was a good time for us to take a crack at it.

Our first class consisted of 22 students. But things changed, and we now have close to 300, with a heavy waiting list for next year — we've interviewed over 600 people for a class of 110. Until two years ago, I interviewed them all myself.
MA: What exactly does the program entail?
JOE: It's a three-year program, and it's very intensive, which means that the average student who attends this school has to expect to be drawing eight to ten hours a day, six to seven days a week. It is not easy. You have to be really dedicated. It's not like college, where you're going just to find out what it is you want to do. There has to be a complete and total commitment, or else you'll never make it through.
MA: Were Adam and Andy atypical in coming to the school without having always been hardcore comics fans?
ANDY: Most of the people who come here start out wanting to be cartoonists, but as they go through, some decide they want to apply their skills to advertising or. . .
JOE: That's right. For most, it is strictly comic books at first. But the cartoonist is kind of a novelty in the world of commercial art. In order to be a good, capable cartoonist, you have to know a lot about a lot of other areas, including painting, anatomy, advertising, lettering, design. . . Very often, students suddenly find animation looming large, for example, or fantasy art, a la Frank Frazetta. Our program is set so that when people come out of here, they're going to be able to get a job in a multiplicity of fields. Of a class of 25, I would say maybe eight or ten go into comic books. The rest go into other areas allied to the kind of illustration that's done in comic books, but not comic books per se.
MA: Who, for instance?
ANDY: Kevin Altieri, who does the Batman animated adventures.
JOE: And Johan Klingler, who worked on *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*.
MA: Has running the school involved much sacrifice of your own time at the drafting table, Joe?
JOE: Yes, but I've never really looked at it that way. The way I came into comics was through a lot of help from other people. I don't remember anybody ever turning his back on me when I asked for help in this business. And the repayment they all were looking for — and they said this to me, as I now say it to others — was if somebody comes along who's trying to break into comics and who demonstrates the necessary commitment, help him. I thought it would be a good idea if there was a place for that.
MA: Joe, do you see much difference between the kinds of stories you've traditionally told in comics and the stories now being told by Adam and Andy and their generation?
JOE: Well, obviously I can speak to that from the historical standpoint, but what do you guys think?
ANDY: *X-MEN* has a self-contained cast. What that means is we feel fans mostly want to see relationships between the characters, not necessarily slugfests page after page.



They're looking for interaction and romance. *Sgt. Rock* and TOR come from a more straightforward, action-oriented [comics era]. X-MEN is a soap opera pretty much. And because that gives you such well-developed characters, the fans can really relate.

I was talking to Bob Harras about this just the other day, and he compares the X-Men with *Star Trek*. People who are really into *Star Trek* want to see the interaction between the characters. Whenever the story focuses on some outside evil, you lose a little interest.

MA: Speaking of Sgt. Rock, Joe, that brings up a noteworthy aside: Any thoughts on the news that Arnold Schwarzenegger is eyeing your war hero as one of his next roles?

JOE: It really doesn't make much difference to me at all. My relationship with the character, except for the last couple of years, has always been on the drawing end. The guy who really made up Sgt. Rock, who put the character down on paper so I could draw it, was Bob Kanigher, the writer. Bob was the best and most prolific writer in the business — he did all the war books. So he might be a little less cool about this.

But you're talking about a business, and Schwarzenegger does bring people to the movies. I think it's a little ironic to have a guy with this definitive accent play the part of Sgt. Rock, but so what? [Chuckles.] I hope the character continues to be successful and make money, because when that happens, it only bodes well for everybody in comics.

MA: Remaining faithful to the Sgt. Rock legend is going to be a tall order, that's for sure. But Andy, you must have felt like you faced a comparable challenge, doing a brief stint on [that same] comic virtually right out of your dad's school. Was it daunting to cut your teeth on a character so closely associated with Joe?

ANDY: At first it was pretty intimidating. But actually, it ended up being a great learning experience, because I was still living at home then, and I would just bring up my layouts and show them to my dad and we'd go over them. And after a while, all the other stuff just went out of my head.

MA: How did *Sgt. Rock* compare with taking on THE X-MEN? After all, this time you were tackling the Marvel flagship, which of course has a pretty formidable legacy of its own.

ANDY: Yeah, that was tough, too. (A) I was doing the X-Men; (B) I was following Jim Lee's phenomenal success on the book. On my first issues I was definitely nervous and uptight about it. But as the run goes on and you get warmed up, you get more comfortable with it. All that stuff goes away and you just concentrate on what you're doing.

No matter how hard I tried, those first issues never came out the way I wanted them to. And to this day it's still that way. I don't know if I'll ever be satisfied with the way the book looks. I don't think that will happen until the end of my career, to tell you the truth.

JOE: I think that's true of all of us, incidentally. Most good artists are never completely satisfied with what they're doing, and they're always hoping that the next job is going to be better than the one they just finished.

MA: Turning again to the evolution of the comics industry for a moment, we hear, Joe, that Tor is a character you owned long before his Epic incarnation. Exactly how far back are we talking about?

JOE: TOR originally came out through the St. John Publishing Company when I got out of the army, so I guess I've held the rights since 1952.

ANDY: B.C. [Laughter.]

MA: Creator-owned comic book characters must have been a pretty revolutionary idea at the time.

JOE: It was unusual, but I didn't really think about it. Tor was something I put together and wanted to hold onto. I had a good mentor when it came to that — Will Eisner, who was actually the first [comic book creator] to have ownership of his material. And that was a standard for any syndicated strip, so I just went by that.

MA: Adam, looking ahead, you've just wrapped up your run on **SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE** to become penciler on **WOLVERINE.** Where will you be going with your new book?

ADAM [sounding beleaguered]: Wherever Larry Hama takes me! [Laughter.] A lot is happening in a really short time at the beginning of the run, because Wolverine has just left the X-Men. He's lost a lot of his power, and he feels he's more of a liability than an asset to them. It figures, once I get onto the book, he's no longer the Wolverine we all know.

MA: You're also going to be inking the new **X-MEN 2099** title. . .

ADAM: Right, over Ron Lim. For me, that's a breath of fresh air — all the layouts are already there, and it's really fun to do. Ron has enough energy for all of us.

MA: Andy, how will Wolverine's exit play out in **X-MEN,** and what else have you and Fabian Nicieza got in the works?

ANDY: There's another character who'll be taking Wolverine's place, but I'm not saying who. He's an X-Men foe. And there will be further developments between Scott and Jean, and Gambit and Rogue.

MA: Given the degree of crossover between your books, it seems likely you two will continue to collaborate as storytellers, albeit maybe less directly than in the past. On assignments where you've teamed up on the art, how did you decide who would pencil and who would ink?

ADAM: On *Batman Versus Predator,*

Andy Kubert's pencil artwork from the "Bloodties" cross-over in THE X-MEN.

Andy was approached first about doing the book, and I said, "That's a cool one — I'm inking it!"

JOE [laughing]: Nepotism rears its ugly head.

ADAM: On *Doc Savage,* we each did both. I was approached first, and it was a four-issue mini-series with a really tight deadline, so as I was penciling the first issue, Andy was penciling the second. . .

ANDY: It was actually the first big thing that we did.

ADAM: And it was fun doing it that way. After the mini-series they came out with a monthly series, and we alternated on the covers.

MA: Which way has the creative arrangement worked best, Adam's inks over Andy's pencils, or the other way around?

ANDY: Well, Adam won the Eisner Award for the inks on *Batman-Predator,* so people think his inking is great.

JOE: Just to interject, I don't think either of the boys looks at the work he does with an inker as being better or worse than what he pencils and inks himself — it's just different.

ANDY: No matter what anybody does with the inks, they're not going to do what you would do. But I've been really lucky with the inkers I've had: my dad, John Severin, Scott Williams, Bill Sienkiewicz, my brother . . .and the guy I just got on **X-MEN,** Matt Ryan. He just got out of my dad's school and went right onto an X-book, which doesn't happen often. He's phenomenal.

MA: Have the three of you worked on any books together, and do you plan to in the future?

ANDY: We did an issue of *Sgt. Rock* that Dad penciled, I inked, and Adam colored.

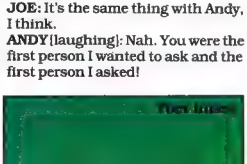
JOE: I've worked a couple of times with each of them individually, but it hasn't been too frequent. The only times I've gone ahead and worked with either of the guys was at their behest, because they were having a problem getting somebody at the time or because there was a heavy deadline.

When I ink other people's work, my approach is perhaps a bit stronger than some people's. I will make whatever changes I feel are necessary to enhance the page. That's kind of a sensitive area, so I've made this clear to both my sons when I've taken on their work. Andy was especially nervous — well, he's a nervous Nellie anyhow — and he'd ask me any number of times [sounding panicked], "What are you gonna do?" And I said, "If you're going to worry about it, or if it's going to upset you, I just won't take it on." I think it's worked out well, though. It doesn't substitute for doing my own stuff, but I enjoy it.

ADAM: The couple times where my dad and I did work together, where he inked some pages of **SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE,** I knew he would say "yes," but I didn't want him to feel as though he had to do it. I know what his schedule is like, so I tried other people first. He was the last person I wanted to ask, but he was the first person I wanted.

JOE: It's the same thing with Andy, I think.

ANDY [laughing]: Nah. You were the first person I wanted to ask and the first person I asked!



STARBLAST

Starting in November, "Starblast," a twelve-part crossover, will pit Marvel's space-faring heroes against the *Starblasters*, a band of deadly pirates who are determined to get hold of the Starbrand relic that gives its possessor power to control the universe.

The explosive chain of events will finally take the once-forbidden step of pulling heroes from the New Universe into the Marvel mainstream.

The action kicks off in **STARBLAST**, a four-issue limited series by QUASAR writer Mark Gruenwald and penciler Herb Trimpe. The cosmic adventure will continue into **QUASAR #54-56**, penciled by John Heebink; **FANTASTIC FOUR #385-386** by its regular team of Tom DeFalco and Paul Ryan; **SECRET DEFENDERS #11** by Ron Marz and Tom Grindberg; and **NAMOR #47-48** by Glenn Herdling and Geof Isherwood (with a tie-in in **NAMOR #46**).

The explosive chain of events will finally take the once-forbidden step of pulling heroes from the New Universe into the Marvel mainstream. Gruenwald was one of the major architects of the New Universe project in the mid-1980's, and he has already craftily woven some of its threads into **QUASAR**.

In an effort to wrest the Starbrand from Kayla Ballantine — its caretaker and Quasar's benevolent girlfriend — the Starblasters will attempt to distract the super heroes by shifting the moon from its orbit.

When various defenders (including Black Bolt, Captain Marvel, Darkstar, Hyperion, Ikaris, and Phoenix) assemble to realign the satellite and dismantle the machine that caused the shift, the Starblasters will launch their attack on Kayla. Despite a preventative strike by the New Warrior Nova, the pirates abduct her from her apartment, separating her from the Starbrand.

The Stranger, Thanos, Doctor Strange (via the Secret Defenders), the Fantastic Four (still recovering from their own recent tragedy), and the Shi'Ar Imperial Guard will also be inexorably drawn into the conflict.

"The opening and closing events [in **STARBLAST**] will potentially destroy the Earth and a sector of the universe," Mark Gruenwald revealed. Eventually, the Starblasters will seal off part of the Marvel Universe, imprisoning several characters and preventing them from returning to the Marvel mainstream.

While comparisons are inevitable between **STARBLAST** and Jim Starlin's trilogy of cosmic crossovers, **THE INFINITY WAR**, **THE INFINITY GAUNTLET**, and **THE INFINITY CRUSADE**, the only true similarity among them is that they are all set in outer space, Gruenwald maintained. "**STARBLAST** will not follow the Infinity paradigm of construction. There will be more lasting consequences for the Marvel Universe from this than from [the most mega-crossovers."

"There won't be a lot of dead air, people standing around and exchanging cookie recipes."

And Gruenwald calls for those consequences to be striking. "I don't want this to be, in order to make this a big event, 'Let's kill some lame-o character nobody cares about,'" he stressed. He added that the conflict between the Starblasters and the heroes will spur a series of dramatic payoffs and "skirmishes throughout the crossover. There won't be a lot of dead air, people standing around and exchanging cookie recipes," he asserted.

Part one of **STARBLAST** is scheduled for release during the first week of November. Each issue of **STARBLAST** will be 32 pages for $1.75, and the crossover will wrap up in late February, setting up the first major shakeup for the Marvel Universe in 1994.

Starblast Crossover Guide

NOVEMBER
Starblast #1
Quasar #54
Secret Defenders #11
Namor #46 (tie-in)

DECEMBER
Starblast #2
Namor #47
Quasar #55
Fantastic Four #385

JANUARY
Starblast #3
Namor #48
Quasar #56
Fantastic Four #386

FEBRUARY
Starblast #4

Hot Sheet

QUOTE OF THE MONTH —
"A lot of people think that Wolverine kills. He doesn't. The Punisher *does* kill. In fact, he's *eager* to take life — to *save* life."

— Don Daley, **PUNISHER** Editor

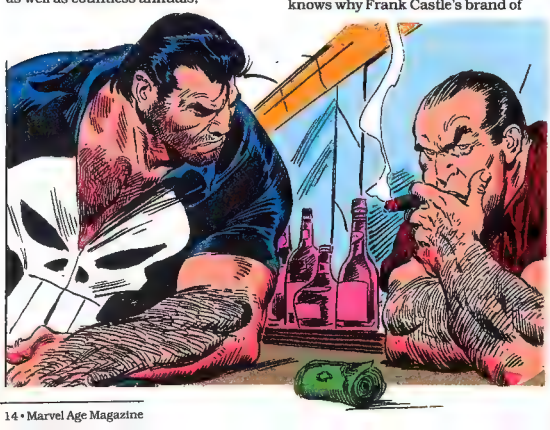
Well, fans, it's time to lock and load! This month "Hot Sheet" focuses on the Punisher, just in time to look into rumors of his impending death!

A MAN AHEAD OF HIS TIME

A lot of readers don't realize this, especially when they see Frank Castle brandishing two shotguns and dodging a hail of bullets, but the Punisher has been around for nearly twenty years now, fighting his own, very personal war on crime and dishing out a special brand of final justice, the kind that, from his point of view, can only come from the business end of a gun. In all that time, his life has been an endless stream of fatalities. For Frank Castle, there's never been a real vacation; he's the original work-a-holic. Today, his stories are told in three monthly series (**THE PUNISHER**, **THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL**, and **THE PUNISHER WAR ZONE**), as well as countless annuals, graphic novels, and specials. And now, *if* the rumor mill is right, Frank Castle's days as the Punisher are about to come to an end.

When he debuted, the Punisher was different from the heroes around him. "The Punisher is a perplexing character," Gary Colabuono of the Chicagoland comic book chain *Moondog's Comics* pointed out. "Nowadays he's the ultimate anti-hero. But from his mundane debut in **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #129**, who would have imagined that this throwaway assassin for hire would still be around in twenty years? The extraordinary growth in popularity of [the] Punisher since the mid-1970's is because he was a bit ahead of his time. He had no super-powers; he relied on his blazing guns. And we all know how popular guys with giant guns are today, don't we?"

Editor Don Daley believes he knows why Frank Castle's brand of heroism is bigger than ever. "The Punisher is twenty years old," Don stated. "You'd think the whole vigilante genre would be overdone by now, milked to death. But in today's violent times. . .with the affluent fleeing to private communities patrolled by private security, with nomadic home invaders scavenging at will across America, with government abdicating its primary responsibility — to protect citizens — we want the Punisher now, more than ever. The rest of the world thinks of the United States as a place where everyone has a gun and is ready to use it, and unfortunately that is where we may be moving as a society. Now more than ever, there is an interest in the Punisher — his brand of justice, his way of getting things done. It's a reflection of what's out there or will be soon, if things don't change."

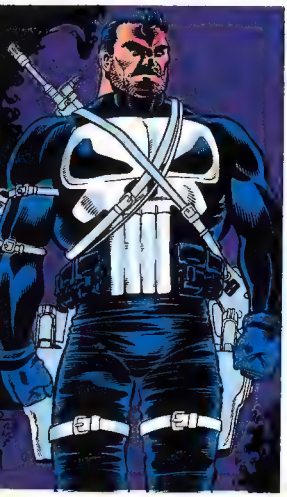


THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

Few know the Punisher like longtime writer Chuck Dixon. Chuck, no stranger to ending the career of famous costumed vigilantes, has put a lot of thought into what sets the Punisher apart from his contemporaries. "Castle's got the hardest edge," Chuck stated. "He's almost apocalyptic in nature. There is no end to the war he's waging against what he sees as the guilty. He is definitely *not* a happy man. His family was killed for being in the wrong place at the wrong time and there will never be an end to his pain. There's no down time for him and there'll be no happiness for him at the end of the road. He's a classic tragic character, but his extreme reaction to his tragedy sets him apart."

Is death and retribution all that the Punisher stands for? Richard Stockton of Texas's *Lone Star Comics* chain sees more depth than just flying lead in what the storytellers who handle this brutal vengeance-seeker write. "When Punisher first debuted, I was struck by his savage nature and waited anxiously for his return. Over the years, Frank Castle has come to define the modern anti-hero and has set standards for characterization that have been copied again and again. In stories like last year's "Blood and Glory," readers have learned that, while the methods of this vigilante are condemnable, he can still be a man worthy of respect. Under the capable hands of Editor Don Daley, the Punisher family of titles has explored new depths of Castle's character and mission."

The artists who draw the Punisher exploits realize there is more here than meets the eye and they try to bring these things out for the reader through very vivid visuals. John Hebert, who has penciled various Punisher annuals and specials over the last couple of years, brings out the many layers of the Punisher and his world. "When I draw Frank Castle I try to hold a picture of Powers Booth in my mind, a rugged face capable of both showing or hiding the emotion within. I try to make the art gritty, hard and realistic, but I also like to blend in a bit of the surreal, especially in the layouts. After all, the world around the Punisher may be realistic, but only to a point. The acts he commits take it over the edge to a different level just beyond the real."



SUICIDE RUN

PUNISHER #86-88 by Dixon & Kwapisz
PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #61-64 by S. Grant, Haynes & McKenna
PUNISHER WAR ZONE #23-25 by Hama, J. Buscema & Mayerik

BEYOND THE RUMOR MILL

So the Punisher is an anti-hero, a gun-toting killer with surprising depth of character. But how long can a man go on putting his body and soul on the line in a never-ending war against drug dealers, terrorists, and scum? Some people think the end is near.

Beginning this November in a ten-part story that could only be called "Suicide Run" (see box for specific issues) Frank Castle leaps over the edge into oblivion. He'll push himself beyond all human limits in a final battle to win his war on crime. For all intents and purposes, this could be the end of the Punisher.

"Some people hope he'll die, some fear it," Don noted in response to the rumors that the Punisher will die this winter. "He's been at it for a very long time and the thing to remember is that Frank is just a man, not an immortal. He's tired. He's been doing this a long time. Part of his war was based on going after criminals to punish them for what happened to his family. But part of it has been to punish himself for allowing them to die while he survived.

"He's suicidal and he knows that eventually this job will be the end of him. It's been twenty years. Realistically, at some point the Punisher must die. We're approaching that point."

HOT PICKS: Here's a quick look at more of the best and most highly recommended entertainment Marvel has to offer this November.

STARBLAST:

Writer Mark Gruenwald, best known as Marvel's Keeper of Continuity, draws nearly the entire Marvel Universe into a cosmic saga to determine the fate of the Starbrand and the heroes of the "New Universe" in the four-issue **STARBLAST** limited series. This story introduces a band of intergalactic cutthroats known as the Starblasters who are hell-bent to wrest the power of the Starbrand from Quasar's girlfriend, and it will cross over into **QUASAR**, **SECRET DEFENDERS**, and **FANTASTIC FOUR**, as well. Before this tale is done, however, the Avengers, Inhumans, Namor, and a host of other star-spanning characters will be drawn into the action. (For more details, see the "Starblast" feature article elsewhere in this issue!)

Anticipation is already running high, as Gary Colabuono pointed out. "No one understands the modern Marvel Universe better than Mark Gruenwald. Over the last decade and a half he has consistently awed and amazed fans with his uncanny ability to sniff out storylines hidden in the nooks and crannies of the complicated continuity that has built up over the last fifty years. I expect great things from him in this new limited series that incorporates such diverse characters into one sweet story. Plus, add the revelation of the final fate of the New Universe, and you have the kind of far-flung intergalactic cosmic extravaganza that mighty Marvel has long been famous for."

HAWKEYE:

He's been a villain. He's been a hero. He's been a leader, a warrior, a husband. But he's never been alone . . . until now. In the aftermath of his wife Mockingbird's tragic death, the Marvel Universe's resident bowman heads for the wilderness of Canada's wasteland to sort out his life in the **HAWKEYE** limited series by Chuck Dixon, Scott (**NAMOR**) Kolins, and Tim (**AVENGERS WEST COAST**) Dzon. Over the course of this brutal and heroic story, which will see this valiant archer fight against some of Marvel's biggest international terrorists, Hawkeye will lay his life bare before his own eyes and learn once again to care and cope. Hawkeye followers know that this will be a turning point. "Throughout Hawkeye's long career in costume," Richard Stockton observed, "readers have seen him in many roles. . . But following the tragedy of **AWC #100**, he must take on the hardest role he has ever had to play — a mourning lover. Facing tragedy sometimes brings out the best in human beings and in **HAWKEYE** we'll learn that to be true of our eagle-eyed costumed crusader."

Steven Snyder of Ohio's *Central City Comics* also commented on the promise that the **HAWKEYE** series holds. "I still can't believe that Mockingbird is dead," Steve said. "This series is especially needed now so that fans can see how Clint will deal with the death of his wife. Scott Kolins's art on **NAMOR** has been outstanding and I look for nothing less than spectacular work from him on this series. Chuck Dixon always turns in a solid story, and he especially shines when writing non-superpowered heroes like Hawkeye."

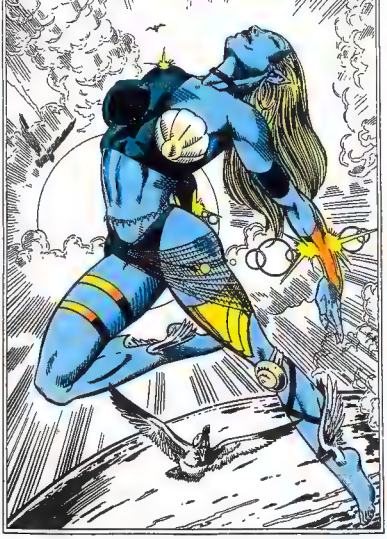
IRON MAN #300:

The Golden Avenger reaches another milestone this year with the release of **IRON MAN #300** by Len Kaminski, Kevin Hopgood, and Steve Mitchell. This issue concludes a three-part story that will feature many new twists and implications for the future. The tale will not only herald the resurrection of the villainous Living Laser, but the return of Tony Stark to active duty inside the Iron Man armor. And if that wasn't enough, Stark will be forced to put all of his suits of armor to use as he calls upon a sort of "Iron Man Corps" to put a stop to the Laser's rampage of destruction — all this and the final confrontation between Stark and his former best friend James Rhodes, a.k.a. War Machine!

Needless to say, excitement surrounding **IRON MAN #300** is reaching a fever pitch. "This story looks awesome," was the praise from Shawn Bantz of the California retail chain *Comics Unlimited*. "When I started reading **HULK**, I thought no one could write better than Peter David on a solo character title, but when I read **IRON MAN**, I'm blown away by the technical and literary jargon that Kaminski dishes out. I loved the creation of War Machine and I was surprised when I read the Technovore storyline. Consequently, looking at the storyline building for #300 is simply mind-boggling."

NEXT ISSUE: A special *final* installment of the "Hot Sheet," starring the web-spinner himself!

Stan's SOAP BOX



Hi, Heroes!

There's a problem that's been plaguing us! Since we always share the good things with you, we might as well let you in on some of the vexing stuff, as well. So here it is, in a nutshell. . .

Years ago, when Marvel was just getting started (you might say it was when Mighty Marvel was merely Semi-Strong Marvel, or perhaps Mini-Mighty Marvel) — anyway, way back in those very early days of comics, most comicbook readers were very young kids.

(Now, hang in there, O' Puzzled Pilgrim; I promise this isn't gonna turn into a hand-me-down history lesson!)

Fact is, your ol' bullpen buddies decided, lo' those many years ago, that we wanted to expand our audience; we wanted to write more intelligent stories, more gripping tales of real, three-dimensional heroes and villains, sagas that older readers would appreciate and enjoy. "Why," we questioned, "did comics just have to be just for little kids?" After all, everybody, no matter what age, loves to look at exciting drawings and to read fantastic, imaginative, bigger-than-life adventure stories.

That's when the problem started!

Beginning with the now-legendary origin issue of the **FANTASTIC FOUR**, we endeavored to create comics that would appeal to readers of all ages. We elected to toss a college-level vocabulary at you and to offer stories containing satire, human interest, realistic characterization, and intriguing subplots, elements that are essential ingredients of most forms of good literature. Most importantly, we strove for stories of such imaginative daring that their premises would exceed anything you'd ever read in any other form of science fiction or fantasy.

Well, as you know, we succeeded far beyond our original expectations. Today, Marvel is known, read, and respected by countless well-educated, adult fans of imaginative fiction and art throughout the world. In fact, primarily due to our groundbreaking efforts, comic books today are one of the fastest growing segments of the cultural explosion.

I can almost hear you mumbling, "So what's the problem?" Glad you asked!

The problem is, since we've been specializing in action-packed super hero sagas for the past few decades, our primary audience now seems to be teenage and older males. Therefore, we suddenly find ourselves faced with a disquieting thought — has Mighty Marvel been neglecting the pre-teens and the females among the reading public?

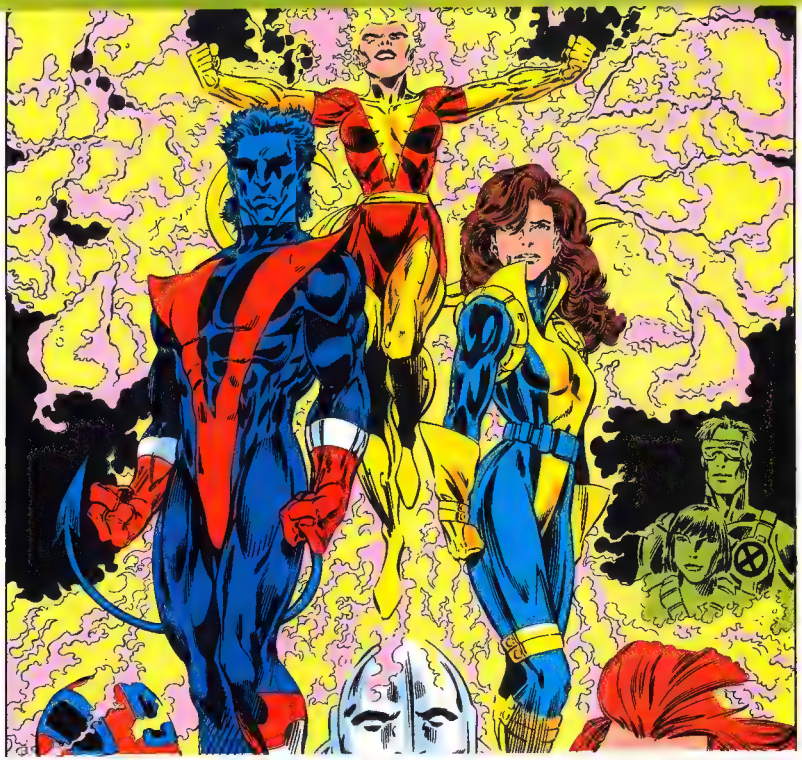
Sure, our original intention was a noble one. We wanted to make comics the entertainment of choice for the entire cultural spectrum of readers. But have we been trying too hard? Have we forgotten the very ones for whom comics were originally intended? Have we been editing our stories in such a way as to make them less accessible to very young boys and perhaps too blatantly machismo for female readers?

Now that the problem is out in the open, here's what we've decided to do about it. We're going to make every effort to broaden our base of readership. For the fairer sex, we'll feature more female characters, both heroes and villains. And, for the younger girls, we'll attempt to expand our *Barbie*-type line of titles. We'll also produce additional adventure titles that are slanted more for the pre-teenage reader. But, no matter for whom our meritorious mags may be intended, you can always rest assured they'll have the same respect for your intelligence for which Marvel has always been noted. You have our promise that we'll never "write down" to anyone. Our goal remains the same — to provide the best entertainment we can to the most readers, and to do it in a mentally stimulating and morally uplifting way!

There you have it! We told you the problem and our proposed solution. Who says this isn't the Marvel Age of Informing the Fans!? Or, as Titanic Terry Stewart himself might say, "*Finis Coronat Opus*!"

Excelsior!

Excalibur reborn!



How will Phoenix deal with Jean Grey and Scott Summers now that the grim future of her own past has been resolved?

What about Phoenix's relationship with Cable?

How about Shadowcat and Colossus, especially after they have shared the grief of Illyana's death?

What if Excalibur came face-to-face with some of the nastiest X-Men villains, such as the Gamesmaster and Upstart Siena Blaze?

And are Nightcrawler and Mystique related?

For the answers to these and many other centuries-old questions regarding ex-X-Men Phoenix, Shadowcat, and Nightcrawler, readers will have to stay tuned to **EXCALIBUR** as this rebel of an X-title moves to Muir Island this fall, the members get new costumes, and the series comes more into line than ever with the rest of the X-books, just as the Legacy Virus hits epidemic proportions.

"**EXCALIBUR** will be much more closely tied in with the X-titles," promised Editor Suzanne Gaffney, who expressed her excitement at the new directions the series will be taking starting with the double-sized hologram issue #71 (now on sale). "We're going to deal with a lot of the relationships they have with the X-people, and the team is going to start to be more pro-active, rather than reactive. They're growing up. They're getting a little more independent and a little more strong-willed."

"Plus, we have a new leader coming in who's going to have direct ties to Professor Xavier," she added. "This person is also going to be a new love interest for Rachel."

And possibly spur a love triangle with Kitty Pryde at the other corner, added writer Richard Ashford (also the editor of **MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS** and **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN**), another Englishman who takes up **EXCALIBUR** with #72 along with penciler and Canadian storyboard artist Kenneth Wayne Lashley and inker Cam Smith (**INCREDIBLE HULK**).

As for the identity of this new leader, Gaffney would only tease at this point. "Readers are going to know who he is before the characters will," she revealed. "Then I think they are going to say, 'Oh, my God, this is way too cool. I can't believe it.'"

For its first 70 issues, EXCALIBUR has been set in Merrie Olde England and served as the "wacky" corner of the X-universe thanks to the unique flavor brought to the book by penciler and often writer Alan Davis. Nightcrawler, Shadowcat, Phoenix, and Davis creations Captain Britain and Meggan traversed a wild highway across diverse earthly timelines

and quirky dimensions, teaming up with aliens and androids and endearingly strange members of Britain's top secret Weird Happenings Organization (**WHO**).

However, with Davis's departure from **EXCALIBUR** (#67 was his last issue as penciler), Marvel's X-editorial teams decided it was time not just to give the series a new locale but take it back to basics. Gaffney had become concerned that EXCALIBUR was becoming too much of an outsider title, that this team was not tied in closely enough with the other X-books, and that readers might prefer more emphasis on "the truest mutants of the the team" — Nightcrawler, Shadowcat, and Phoenix. All of which raised a serious question — whether to continue the title at all without Davis, or just merge the characters into the other titles.

"**EXCALIBUR** had been so closely tied to Alan Davis," Gaffney explained, "that when he decided to move on, we thought we might instead work the characters into the X-books. Then we decided to just let them strike out on their own and pare the book down to see where it goes."

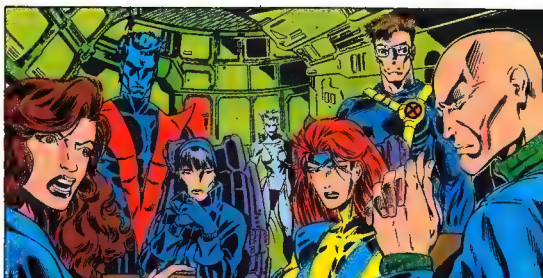
Her next step was to solicit writer proposals that reflected a different — in her words, a "more meaty" approach.

"Richard Ashford came in with an excellent proposal including some of the things that Bob [Harras] and I had been thinking of," Suzanne said, "and he wanted to take it to places that we *hadn't* been thinking of. I just thought he had the right tone for it."

As for Lashley, when friend and comics television journalist Mark Askwith showed Gaffney some of Lashley's pencils at a comic book convention last January, she was drawn to them because they were so "dynamic."

"I had been looking at samples for quite a while and I wanted somebody who had the same kind of clarity as the artists on the X-Men books, but I also wanted something a little different, a little distinctive, because I think **EXCALIBUR** has always had its own feel. Each of the X-books has its own look that suits each book better than the others. So I was looking for, I guess, a certain flair. When I saw Ken Lashley's pencils, I knew that he was the one, and I think Cam Smith is going to look great over him."

Lashley himself described his approach to **EXCALIBUR** as taking a lot from Davis, but also springing forth on his own. His major influences, for example, have been Dale Keown and John Byrne, he said, adding that his artwork had often been compared to a merging of their two styles. As for one particular way his look might differ from Davis's, he suggested that his Nightcrawler might be a "little bit more demon-like. That's my style. I'd rather have him look less human and more demonic."



And what will happen to the rest of the team? Lockheed will be flying along with Mistress Pryde, but Captain Britain will remain trapped in that time warp for a while. Meggan is staying home at Braddock Manor, and Cerise, Kylun, Micromax, and Widget will be dropping out of the storyline for a few months, not that, as Ashford noted, Nightcrawler won't miss his alien sweetheart.

"I worked the team down to what I saw as the core characters," said Ashford. "We will be seeing Captain Britain and Meggan," Gaffney assured. "There are certain forces that are pulling him back to this dimension so he's making his way back here. We're going to pick the ties with Meggan and Captain Britain up again, but it's going to be more of a subplot."

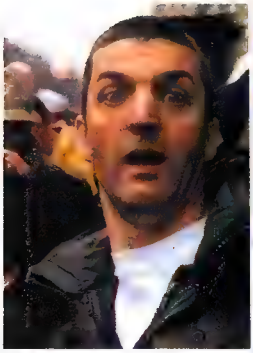
Other supporting cast members such as Alistaire Stuart and members of WHO will make fewer appearances but, like Captain Britain, they will not disappear completely. It's just that Excalibur will no longer be spending much time in Great Britain, where these characters live.

"If in the story they go to places where they have met characters in the past, they'll meet those characters again," said Ashford, "but their agenda is now very much a world wide agenda." Plus, as Ashford re-emphasized, there is only one Alan Davis, all of these characters are very much his unique creations, and he's a tough act to follow.

"Basically, I feel that a lot of the wackiness was so distinctive to Alan that I don't feel I should go and mimic that," Ashford said, admitting he was a big fan of Davis's work on the series. "The way he approached the book was his vision, style, whatever you'd like to call it. I plan to focus very much on the characters and how they interact with each other and with the other X-Men."

Gaffney added that she hopes that Davis would return to the title to do occasional one-shot special issues. "I think it was hard for him to leave," she said, noting that Davis's reasons were not due to any boredom with the series, but purely financial. It was difficult for him to make a living earning U.S. currency paychecks given the current dollar versus U.K. pound exchange rate.

Right now, though, while Gaffney said she is very satisfied with the



Richard Ashford

strength of editorial plans through #75, the new post-Davis incarnation of **EXCALIBUR** is still very much in the planning stages and, like a sudden Davis cross-time warp, many aspects of the long-range plotline have yet to be established. She did offer a few clues.

For example, she cited the impetus behind Excalibur's relocation to Muir Island. Does Professor X ask them, or do they decide on their own? All she would guarantee is that, in the end, "it's going to be a mutual thing. I'd give the whole thing away if I said any more." She further noted that Colossus's involvement with the events in #71 is a crucial key in setting up the future for the title. Simply drawing Colossus provided a big thrill for Lashley, who admitted that Colossus was the first Marvel character he had ever sketched as a kid, and then his first Marvel assignment — a pin-up.

"Colossus is by far my favorite character," he said. "He reminds me of me. He's a big guy and he draws."

As for editorial reasons for the Muir Island home base, Moira McTaggert's conversion of Muir Island into a medical treatment center for victims of the Legacy Virus made it an ideal setting for Excalibur to rejoin the mainframe of the X-continuity.

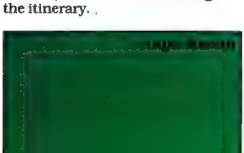
"Muir Island is a bit more grim than being in Merrie Olde England," Gaffney said, "but I think the whole X-Universe is entering into more desperate, more serious times, so I think that would be reflected no matter where they go. Still, Muir Island is going to be a particularly busy place. Otherwise, I guess they will be more international, not that they've ever *not* been international."

More intercontinental travel as opposed to cross time cavorting will also allow a unique opportunity for Excalibur to have interaction with new and different mutants and temporary teammates. "Excalibur will be sent on rescue missions for various mutants," Gaffney elaborated. "They will realize that a lot of mutants are being used as pawns internationally. For example, countries will horde mutants like they are nuclear weapons to use against each other or to keep mutants from being used against them. Some of these mutants will be joining the team. Some of them will be staying for a couple of issues. There will be new members coming in and going out with a solid core of the three of them."

And if some old familiar faces are gone, the X-Men will not be the only major Marvel super guest stars making cameos. Franklin Richards from **FANTASTIC FOUR** will be dropping in soon, for example. All of which gives Lashley hope his stint on **EXCALIBUR** will give him a chance to draw another favorite Marvel character — the Incredible Hulk.

"I would love to see the Hulk stick his green head in there," he admitted with a laugh.

Whether the green guy pops by or not, from cross-time to cross-continent, if it's been a strange trip so far for team Excalibur, with Davis's legacy of great storytelling, his departure only looks to mean a change in the itinerary.



HEMBECK

Immediately following the BIRTH of his daughter PATRICIA, MICHAEL COLLINS -- ALSO known as DEATHLOK -- found himself adjusting to the role of FATHERHOOD by taking his baby out for a STROLL in her STROLLER...
YOU are the APPLE of my ONE good eye, you little cutie you!
GOOD DAY to you, Mrs. SMITH... Mrs. JONES.
Um, ah, good day to you as well, Mr.-- er--COLLINS.
OH NO! He's NOT going to make us LOOK at--
Would you LIKE to take a PEEK at my PRECIOUS LITTLE PATTY?
Gee, we'd HATE to DISTURB the SWEET THING, heh..
..BAD enough we've got to STARE at the DAD...
No, no--you WON'T bother her. Go ahead.
But Mr. Collins, we're STRANGERS to her--what if we should FRI--
..MORE likely it'd be US SHE'D FRI-
LOOK!!
LOOK at my GORGEOUS kid, you OLD BIDDIES!!
W..well, if you're SURE it's not going to BOTHER the little tyke, okay...
:gulp:
H-hello little girl...
?
Huh? What an ADORABLE baby!?!
Gosh, she really IS a BEAUTIFUL child!?
y'know, she looks JUST like her MOTHER!
(LUCKY for HER!)
Thank you.
Well, we have to GO now!
BYE!
...I think...
GOD!

Before MARVELS...

. . .there was "The Origin of the Human Torch."

A few years ago, while working on an illustration of the Terminator walking through a wall of flames, artist Alex Ross was struck by the urge to produce an image of the *original* man afire — the Human Torch. He began a proposal for a fully painted project featuring the Torch and the Sub Mariner, the stars of 1939's **MARVEL COMICS #1**.

Alex discussed the project with writer Kurt Busiek, and together they developed a four-issue, deluxe series which focuses, as Alex explained, "on the point of view of a common man who was around from the dawn of the super heroes. What we felt made it unique was that our main character would see these heroes from the *outside*, giving us a real perspective on how people would feel if they co-existed with creatures of this magnitude." **MARVELS** is slated to hit the stands beginning next month.

But before Kurt (and Editor Marc McLaurin) became involved, Alex and his friend, Steve Darnall, produced a twelve-page "Origin of the Human Torch." It was not scheduled to be a part of **MARVELS**, since it is told strictly from the perspective of the Torch himself.

Marc's loss is the **MARVEL AGE** reader's gain, for the story will be serialized in these pages, beginning last month and continuing through December. Alex is also allowing **MARVEL AGE** to reproduce some of his "concept sketches," a series of painted illustrations produced to accompany the proposal. These will appear with the introduction to each **MARVEL AGE** installment.

Enjoy.

— Steve Saffel

LAST ISSUE: *Professor Phineas Horton, a scientist decades ahead of his time, first breathed life into his greatest creation, an android who, upon contact with air, burst into flames! Thus was born the original Human Torch.*

Extremely sheepish editor's note. . . *Page 22 of MARVEL AGE #130 has three lines of type out of place. Unfortunately, it makes the page one of the most perfect examples of chaos in journalism history. So we are here going to print the copy from page 22, in correct order. Please feel free to cut and paste, jump back and forth between issues, or simply sit back and enjoy the beauty of Alex's artwork. But, no matter what you do, don't blame writer Anya Martin or our proofreaders, Jack and Flo. They did their usual excellent jobs.*

—Steve Saf

be a real person experiencing the Marvel Universe, as opposed to the normal Marvel reader's expectation — knowing intimate details of the heroes' private lives, their innermost thoughts, their hopes and dreams." writer Busiek related. "If you were actually in the Marvel Universe, it would be a very, very different experience. They'd be celebrities; they'd be kind of scary. And normal life would be disrupted on a constant basis by the kind of things that go on."

On the eve of World War II, Phil Shelton is engaged to marry his childhood sweetheart, but life is about to take an unexpected and unsettling turn. As **MARVELS #1** progresses, he attends the press conference where Professor Horton unveils the Human Torch, and experiences the Sub-Mariner's first rampage in New York. Phil's camera and emotions provide the lens through which the reader sees the super heroes' arrival and continues to observe their evolution over the course of an ordinary man's lifespan.

"At first, Phil thinks this is major upheaval that will go away and [things will] go back to normal," Busiek said. "He wants to put off the wedding until these dangerous freaks are gone. Then it becomes clear they are not going to go away, and they may not be as dangerous as people think they are. The issue culminates with the Sub-Mariner's second major attack on the surface world, a story never retold in any modern Marvel comic. He floods Manhattan and battles the Torch, and Phil witnesses all of that."

In the second issue, events jump forward in time to the Silver Age, when the Avengers and X-Men have just arrived on the scene and Reed Richards and Sue Storm announce their engagement. Their wedding day is revealed to be the same day the Sentinels first came to New York to stalk the X-Men. It was decided early on to build all of the action around major events of Marvel Universe history. Each issue would represent 26-27 months of Marvel continuity; prior to plotting each issue, Busiek would read more than 100 comic books in whatever format he could get his hands on — micr fiche, **MARVEL MASTERWORKS** editions, and original comics. This meticulous research allowed him to tie legendary events together into a cohesive storyline. "Marcus every now and then would bug me for the next plot," he recalled, "and I had to say, 'look, I've got 120 comics to read and take notes on before I can figure out what the plot is, because I can't make anything up.'"

MARVELS #3 introduces the Silver Surfer and Galactus, and #4 opens up with the Kree-Skrull War and culminates with the death of Gwen Stacy.

HIS DISCOVERIES FAR OUT-NUMBERED THOSE OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES.
YEARS AHEAD OF HIS TIME, HORTON'S ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE OF STEEL AND SYNTHETICS, COUPLED WITH A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN MIND, MADE HIM THE ENVY AND ODDITY OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY.
FOR HIM SCIENCE WAS THE MEANS BY WHICH HE COULD ACHIEVE HIS GOAL... TO UNLOCK THE DEEPER SECRETS OF CREATION ITSELF.
AS HE WITHSTOOD THE SKEPTICISM AND JEERS OF HIS COLLEAGUES, HE POOLED HIS RESOURCES FOR THE REALIZATION OF HIS GOAL.
THE STRESS OF HIS LIFE'S WORK WOULD CULMINATE IN ME.

I CANNOT RECALL IT PERFECTLY; BUT IN MY FIRST MOMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS, SOMETHING UNPREDICTED
OCCURRED:
DUE TO SOME FLAW IN MY ORIGINAL CONCEPTION, MY BODY HAD AN INCENDIARY REACTION TO THE CONTACT WITH AIR

DESPITE THIS, I REMAINED COMPLETELY UNHARMED. AND ONCE THE SUPPLY OF OXYGEN WAS CUT OFF...
THE DESTRUCTIVE FIRE CEASED, AND I RETURNED TO MY FORMER INERT STATE.
THE FIRST OF THOSE TO SEE ME WERE TERRIFIED BY MY PECULIAR ABILITY.
PHINEAS HORTON WAS LIKE A MODERN DAY PROMETHEUS, STEALING FIRE FROM THE HEAVENS AND HANDING A HUMAN TORCH DOWN TO MAN.
HOWEVER, MANKIND WOULD NOT BE READY FOR THIS GIFT AND HORTON WAS SCORNED FOR CREATING A POTENTIAL MENACE.

'LOKED IN TIME

The Return of the Demolisher"

It's a story that's been brewing since the Deathlok series began in 1991 — the connection between the present-day *Michael Collins* Deathlok and the Luther Manning version that stalked the streets of the Marvel Universe a few years back.

It comes to a boil in "Cyberstrike," beginning in issue #31 of **DEATHLOK** (on sale in November) and concluding with #34, the final issue of the series — as *three* Deathloks converge on an alternate world; one a pacifist, another an amoral killer, and the third forced into the role against his will.

The result will be the end of Deathlok as readers know him and quite possibly a new series sprung from the pivotal sequence of events.

Cyborgs[3]:

Since **DEATHLOK #25**, events have unfolded to reveal the whereabouts of the Luther Manning Deathlok. Having returned to his alternate future following his last recorded adventure (with Captain America), Deathlok was sent on a suicide mission by the mysterious power-monger Godwulf. Deathlok's new-found allies from that Captain America story were slaughtered to a man, and Deathlok himself barely survived, having suffered massive damage to his cyborg frame.

No longer does this Deathlok feel *any* sense of duty to helping others.

He reconstructed himself, repairing what he could of the remains of his cyborg form.

The world he has lived in is a barren wasteland with mutant breeds of cannibalistic humans rising from the ashes. No longer does this Deathlok feel *any* sense of duty to helping others. He survives, thinking only of his own needs, eking out an existence as best he can. In fact, he is no longer Deathlok — he is the Demolisher, a man/machine without morals in an eat-or-be-eaten world.

(How the original Luther Manning Deathlok ended up in that timeline can be discovered in **DEATHLOK LIVES!**, a $4.95 reprint book available in December featuring the **CAPTAIN AMERICA** issues that developed the plight of "Deathlok the First.")

Back in the mainstream Marvel timeline, Michael Collins, the current Deathlok, is a peace-loving family man. In the present series, he often confronts his obligation to society and his desire to live a normal life with his wife and children. How will he react when faced with a version of himself that has no sense of right and wrong? What will he do when his values, his code of honor, are proved meaningless and, in fact, dangerous? Can he adjust to a place of absolute destruction, with no social mores of any kind, or will his own sense of ethics end up killing him?

As if two Deathloks weren't enough, number three is the Luther Manning of Michael Collins's world, who, having experienced precognitive dreams, finds his life violently turned on edge by a madman.

Temporal reconstructive surgery:

Who brings these three together? ***Timestream.*** The king who lost his own kingdom wants to once again establish total dominion for himself, and he doesn't care what the cost to human life will be.

He begins his course of action in Australia, fighting alongside his minions against Aussie soldiers. Deathlok hears of the conflict over the cyber-net and soon ends up in the middle of the battle in the outback. The Michael Collins Deathlok and his ally Siege defeat Timestream, who then calls on the Demolisher, figuring that he'll be able to use him to accomplish world domination. He soon learns that the Demolisher is too violently uncontrollable and will

be of no use whatsoever, and so Timestream moves on to his second plan, to locate the Luther Manning of the Michael Collins universe.

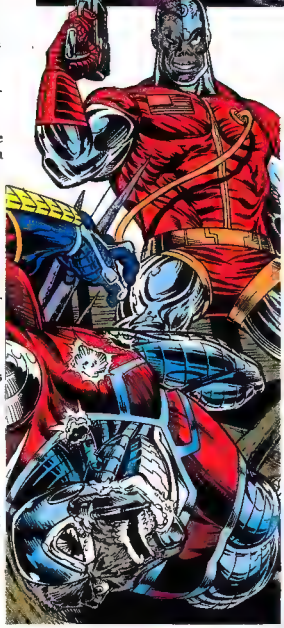
Using his time-warping abilities, Timestream transforms Luther Manning of Collins's timeline into a doppelganger of the *original* undestroyed Deathlok. Timestream's ultimate goal is to rearrange the course of history, to make the Demolisher's world the "real" continuity, and reinstate himself as supreme ruler of Earth.

Greg and Tom had been itching to do a story that tied the Deathlok I with Deathlok II.

In order to develop this complicated plot, the writer and artist had to work in close conjunction with each other. Greg and Tom had been itching to do a story that tied the Deathlok I with Deathlok II. The time had come. Greg Wright, who also writes **MORBIUS THE LIVING VAMPIRE**, called "Cyberstrike" "something like a cybernetic chess game of strange moves. Timestream plays the three Deathloks against each other and no one necessarily 'wins' this one." Greg enjoys the contrast between these three characters: the man torn by his family responsibilities and not even sure if he can protect them; the Demolisher, a ruthless killer who gave up because every time he tried to make things better, they just got worse; and the guy in the wrong place at the right time, who only gets involved at all because Timestream promises to give him his life back.

Greg worked closely with penciler Kevin Kobasic to develop the story—the look and feel of it. Greg added that Kevin put unexpected details into the work that make the story that much better.

Kobasic, whose past work includes the **PUNISHER**, the **'NAM** and **DAREDEVIL** back-ups, loves working on **DEATHLOK**. He explained that it gives him a chance to "pour his heart into a project, to work at making Deathlok the coolest-looking character I can." He added that he dreams about ways to improve the book, that it's an all-consuming process. Kevin redesigned the Demolisher, making him a ripped-up, long-haired, monster creation, in his own words, "part Road Warrior, part Berni Wrightson's Frankenstein."



Fueling the fires:

Angry that the title is slated for cancellation just as the new creative team is hitting stride, but committed to making the end as dramatic as possible, Kevin commented, "All of us are bursting with ideas. Greg Adams, the inker, comes up with some crazy ideas himself, and we talk them over and implement them."

It appears to be a mutual appreciation society on all counts. Tom Brevoort loves what his team dreams up and Greg, Kevin, and Greg all feel a synergy between them and with Tom. Despite their collective grief over the book's cancellation, they're not giving up the cyborg yet. Greg and Tom warn that it's very possible Michael Collins won't survive. Kevin and Greg are gung-ho to take the Demolisher and create a new series for him — they're working on the chiefs-of-staff to make it happen. Both of them believe that it's time to return to the roots of the character, and take him even further than before.

After all, times change and so do comics. Come this time next year, possibly sooner, there might just be a new anti-hero on the block. As Tom noted, the original Deathlok predated the whole "cyber-punk" era. Deathlok *will* be back, he promised, but he'll never be the same.

GROO

Serious Thoughts after 105 Issues

by Mark Evanier
(with annotations by Sergio Aragonés)

Ah, it seems like only yesterday that Sergio and I thought of the first joke for GROO[1]. You know, though I have constantly kidded our little funnybook enterprise and made occasional jokes at the expense of Señor Aragonés[2], I must own up to being very proud of what we have achieved in these last 105 issues[3].

There are many benefits to working on a book like **GROO THE WANDERER**[4] but perhaps the greatest reward of all is the knowledge that we are entertaining so many readers[5]. For more than a hundred issues now, you've made us feel welcome by paying the (unfortunately) ever-increasing price tag each month and by filling our mailbox with what I think must be the wittiest, funniest assemblage of mail ever received by a comic book[6].

Certain questions, of course, keep popping up: Many of you have asked just what it is I do on this comic[7] and I guess I can best explain it by saying that I provide the words that elucidate and clarify the graphic imagery that festoons our pages[8]. It has been a wonderful experience. . .and to think, I even get paid for it![9] The joy, the honor, the excitement. . .I don't know that I can even find the proper word to describe my relationship with this comic[10].

And I am especially proud of our longevity: Other comics come and go with quick mini-series, short-term runs, and brief, shining moments[11]. **GROO** goes on, month after month . . .and all thanks to the cartooning genius of one Sergio Aragonés[12].

It is customary in a piece like this to offer a preview of what lies ahead in the comic. . .but I think I will do you a favor and keep it a secret[13]. You know, though we sometimes jest that every issue of **GROO** is exactly the same as every other issue of **GROO**[14], we've actually covered an amazing lot of ground in 105-plus issues, met some incredible characters[15] and experienced some truly innovative adventures[16], and I can only promise you that, as long as I'm involved with the book[17], we won't let down our standards for an instant[18].

1. It was day before yesterday. — *Sergio*
2. At least until I learn how to read English. — *Sergio*
3. What you mean "we?" I sit here at board all day and night drawing . .Stan work hard lettering, Tom Luth not leave his house for months at a time, coloring take so long. You cruise around in T-Bird with hot babes and write dumb poem and letter page once a month. Where this "we" come from? — *Sergio*
4. Name two. — *Sergio*
5. Name one. — *Sergio*
6. Wish you were half as funny as readers. — *Sergio*
7. I want to know. Also Tom and Stan. — *Sergio*
8. I speak nine languages. That make sense in none of them. — *Sergio*
9. "Paid?" You get paid? How come I not get paid? — *Sergio*
10. I can. Try "over." It is over. You fired. — *Sergio*
11. Also, better dialogue. — *Sergio*
12. Don't try make up. You still fired. — *Sergio*
13. You got no idea either, huh? — *Sergio*
14. Truth is funny. — *Sergio*
15. Usually Pal and Drumm again. — *Sergio*
16. Groo burn down city, slay everyone in it. What so innovative about that? — *Sergio*
17. Until next Tuesday. — *Sergio*
18. "Standards?" — Sergio

WRITE A LETTER, YOU'LL FEEL BETTER

Send your letters to: MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE, c/o Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.

All letters to be considered for publication must include your complete name and address, though we will gladly withhold that info on request!

This month's letter column title is a perspicacious prescription from Costas Impilikiou of far-off Athens, Greece. Thanks, Costas! We feel better already, though we'll need to refill our prescription with a snappy new title for this column every month. So send your ideas on in! If we use one, we'll thank you in this very space — you don't even have to make a house call.

We've received a bunch of letters recently from people asking for new series. Let's see what we can do to make *them* feel a little better. . .

From Joe Kubert's sketchbook: the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC.

To whom it may concern,

I have collected comic books for a long time (about six years now) and my favorite title was **TRANSFORMERS.** I also collect the toys and it has come to my attention that Hasbro has started making the toys again.

I (and I know there must be others out there who share my feelings) would like to see the comic book come out again. It is not just a children's book either. Most people looked at it as one, but I do not. I am 17 years old and proud to like **TRANSFORMERS.**

Do us all a favor and bring them back (although I do not know why you canceled it in the first place).

Robert L. Jennings Jr.
(Address withheld by request)

Robert, the reason why TRANSFORMERS was canceled was that not enough people were buying copies to keep it going. But, as you probably know by now, the TRANSFORMERS are back in an all-new monthly series by Simon Furman and Derek Yaniger. How long they hang around depends on the support of people like you, but everyone involved with the series has high hopes. After all, they are more than meets the eye!

Dear Marvel,

I searched through my back issues of **MARVEL AGE** to find an article about a new line of comics that seem to have ceased after a short run. I am referring to your Nelson line. I have enjoyed The **BIRTH OF CHRIST** and the two issues of **ILLUMINATOR,** but I am still waiting and wondering when **MIRACLES, DEATH AND RESURRECTION, PILGRIM'S PROGRESS** and **THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS** will be available. My comics shop dealer has not heard anything about these issues. I would be very disappointed if Marvel gave up this idea.

Robert S. Wilson
2741 Benton Street
Santa Clara, CA 95051

Never fear, Robert — the Nelson line is alive and well. By the time you read this, PILGRIM'S PROGRESS and THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS should have seen print, so if your comics dealer doesn't have them, you might want to check out your local Christian book store. DEATH AND RESURRECTION should be coming out later this year, while MIRACLES is scheduled for 1994.

Dear MARVEL AGE,

I love comics. I have no subscription, but I have a lot of comics. My favorites are **MARVEL AGE, WOLVERINE, X-FORCE, X-FACTOR, X-MEN CLASSICS, FANTASTIC FOUR, NIGHT THRASHER, CAPTAIN AMERICA, IRON MAN** and **THOR.** I have one question: Do you think that Marvel will have a 2099 character for everyone?

Thomas Tobin
(Address withheld by request)

Thomas, the answer to your question really depends more on you than us. If enough people who support the various 2099 series keep asking for more, then we'll supply them. So if you and all those other 2099 enthusiasts keep spreading the word, we might just wind up with futuristic versions of all our characters. . .hopefully, sometime before the year 2099.

WHY DOES A GENTLEMAN WEAR FINE, HAND-TOOLED SILVER BUTTONS FROM McCORKLE AND WYNN BUTTONEERS?
I AM AT A LOSS, MADAM. WHY, PRAY TELL?
TO KEEP HIS FLORAL WAISTCOAT IN CORDED AND STUFFED QUILTED SILK TAFFETA FASTENED.
ADAM KUBERT

Dear sirs of Marvel,

I have a very important question to ask you! Whatever happened to the good Western comic books that my father always talks about? I mean comics about heroes such as Kid Colt, who wore a white and black spotted vest and carried two guns. Also, the Rawhide Kid, who was a redheaded gunslinger. And the Ringo Kid, who was also lightning with his guns. There was also, my father believes, a Two-Gun Kid comic book.

Please bring back some good comics like these. My dad says today's comics are sick, and I believe him.

Robert Clifton
Rt. 1, Box 8
Union, MS 39365

At the moment, we may not be publishing any of the ones you mentioned, but check out THE ORIGINAL GHOST RIDER — in addition to reprinting stories from the days when Johnny Blaze was riding around with a flaming skull, the series features all-new back-up stories starring the six-gun-toting Night Rider, drawn by original series illustrator Dick Ayers! (Why is Night Rider in a Ghost Rider title? Years ago, when Night Rider first appeared, he was called. . .the Ghost Rider!)

You may want to try searching your local comics specialty shop for back issues of KID COLT, THE RAWHIDE KID, THE TWO-GUN KID, and the various other Marvel western titles. And you may also want to poke around for the RAWHIDE KID limited series that came out in the mid-'80's. See ya at the roundup.

Which reminds us, it's time once again to round up a LETTER OF THE MONTH! We've dug deep into our mountain of mail and lassoed a letter that we think will be of particular interest to Marveldom at large. This time our dignified Letter of the Month has certainly earned a goodly amount of honor, since it's got a lot of "character."

Dear Marvel Comics executives,

My friend, Kayla Juhaz, and I have been working very hard on some original characters, and we would like to know how to go about having you take a look at the good guys, the "Natural Disasters," and the bad guys, the "Evilons."

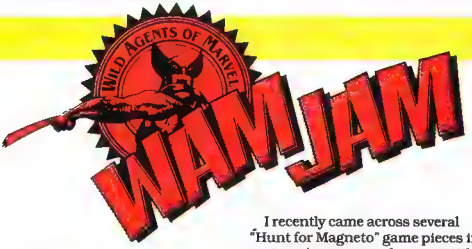
Please get back to us as soon as possible. Thank you.

Jeremiah Pointer
113 Oak Street
Oak Harbor, OH 43449

From Adam Kubert's files. . .

Sorry, Jeremiah, but while your characters sound great, Marvel has a policy of not looking at outside ideas for new characters. As Mark Gruenwald explained it to us, Marvel pays writers and artists for stories, not individual characters. As a result, it's their job to come up with the new characters in use. Even when people like you offer them to us for free, we don't take outside characters, simply because we don't want to rip anybody off.

Well, looks like we're coming to the end of yet another letter column. But before we go, let's pick up the latest secret missive from one of our favorite Wild Agents of Marvel in our monthly. . .



Remember: If you want to take part in a future WAM Jam yourself, all you have to do is write to us on official WAM stationery or include your WAM I.D. number in your letter. As usual, microfilming is optional.

Dear **WAM Jam**,

Help!!! I'm writing to ask you for your invaluable assistance in answering an inquiry that's been bugging me.

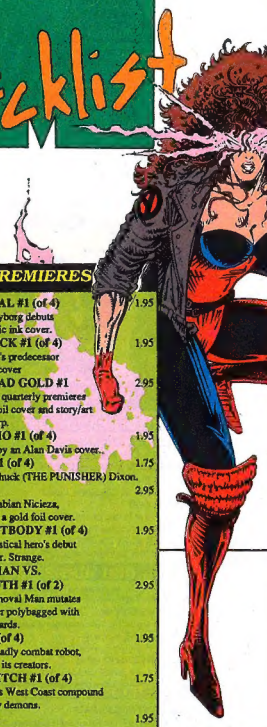
I recently came across several "Hunt for Magneto" game pieces in various Avengers and mutant titles. I was quite excited to know of an opportunity to enter your contest and a chance for me to win really cool stuff from you Marvel guys, but my excitement turned to disappointment when I later found out that the contest is open only to U.S. residents. I am a certified **WAM** charter member, and as **WAM** members, we are privy to a lot of stuff that ordinary humanoids could not know of or join. What I want to know is if **WAM** members can join the contest even if we are not U.S. residents. I use the term "we since I have a pen pal who is also a **WAM** member but he's Canadian and he would also love to join your contest.

Agent #1322 signing off until the next transmission.

Arthur T. Yap
33 Quezon Street
Iolio City 5000
Philippines

Wish we had better news for you, Arthur, but it seems that it's not really up to us. In fact, Debbie Markowitz (who's in charge of the sweepstakes) has been trying to find a way around the problem, since she's been getting a lot of mail and phone calls from folks in other countries. But the bottom line is that the contest is considered to be a lottery, and there's a United States federal law that says lotteries have to be limited to U.S. residents.

checklist



PREMIERES

DEATH METAL #1 (of 4) 1.95
The deadly cyborg debuts with a metallic ink cover.

DEATH WRECK #1 (of 4) 1.95
Death's Head's predecessor Metallic ink cover

DEATH'S HEAD GOLD #1 2.95
This 64-page quarterly premieres with a gold foil cover and story/art by Liam Sharp.

DOCTOR WHO #1 (of 4) 1.95
Highlighted by an Alan Davis cover.

HAWKEYE #1 (of 4) 1.75
Written by Chuck (THE PUNISHER) Dixon.

NOVA #1 2.95
Written by Fabian Nicieza, 48 pages and a gold foil cover.

OFFICER OUTBODY #1 (of 4) 1.95
This new mystical hero's debut is aided by Dr. Strange.

REMOVAL MAN VS. MOTORMOUTH #3 (of 2) 2.95
Assassin Removal Man mutates into a monster polybagged with two trading cards

RIPWIRE #1 (of 4) 1.95
Ripwire, a deadly combat robot, escapes from its creators.

SCARLET WITCH #1 (of 4) 1.75
The Avengers West Coast compound is attacked by demons.

WARHIDE #1 1.95
A very different hero from behind the Iron Curtain

GUEST APPEARANCES

CAPTAIN AMERICA #423 1.25
Namor

CYBERSPACE 3000 #7 1.75
Adam Warlock

DAREDEVIL #324 1.25
Morbius

DARKHAWK #35 1.25
Venom

GAMBIT #2 (of 4) 2.00
Rogue

MOTORMOUTH & KILLPOWER #3 (of 4) 1.75
Death's Head II

NOMAD #21 1.75
Man-Thing

PLASMER #3 (of 4) 1.95
Captain America

SLEEPWALKER #32 1.25
Spider-Man

SPIDER-MAN #42 1.75
Iron Fist

THUNDERSTRIKE #4 1.25
Spider-Man

WILD THING #10 1.75
Nick Fury & Death Duty

MATCHES OF THE MONTH

DAREDEVIL: THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR #4 (of 5) 2.95
D.D. vs. the Kingpin

DIE CUT #3 (of 4) 1.75
Die Cut vs. the X-Beast

EXCALIBUR #73 1.75
Excalibur vs. Sienna Blaze

FANTASTIC FOUR #384 1.25
Sue Richards vs. Franklin Richards

GENETIX #4 (of 6) 1.75
Genetix vs. the Gene Dogs

NAMOR #46 1.25
Namor vs. Triton

RAVAGE 2099 #14 1.25
Ravage 2099 vs. the Punisher 2099

VENOM: THE MADNESS #3 (of 3) 2.95
Venom vs. Juggernaut

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #108 1.25
Spidey & Sandman vs. Sandstorm & Quicksand

WOLVERINE #77 1.75
Wolvie vs. Lady Deathstryke

X-FACTOR #98 1.25
Havok vs. Random

X-FORCE #30 1.25
Shatterstar vs. X-Treme

X-MEN #28 1.25
The X-Men vs. Sabretooth

NOVEMBER HOT PICKS

AVENGERS STRIKE FILE #1 1.75
32 pages of pin-ups and bios of the Avengers' deadliest foes
"About half the book utilizes the latest in computer-generated images. It's not like STRYFE'S STRIKE FILE, it's like nothing you've ever seen before."
— Editor Richard Ashford

AVENGERS WEST COAST #102 1.25
The final issue.
"I'm torn, on the one hand it's the beginning of a whole new direction for the team in the new book, FORCE WORKS, and on the other, I'm going to miss working with Roy Thomas and Dave Ross. It brings tears to my eyes."— Editor Nel Yomtov

GHOST RIDER/SPIDER-MAN: SPIRITS OF VENOM TPB 9.95
The crossover from SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #5-6 and WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #55-56
"With hot art by the hot Adam (WOLVERINE) Kubert, nobody's going to be trading this book away!"— Assistant Editor James "Professor" Felder

IRON MAN #300 1.25
An embossed red and gold foil cover adorns this 64-page special.
"Stark is back in new armor plus glimpses of a few old favorite ones. This is the epic Iron Man saga of the past 30 years."
— Editor Nel Yomtov

MARVEL FRONTIER UNLIMITED #1 2.95
64-page anthology of IMMORTALIS, BLOODSEED, CHILDREN OF THE VOYAGER and more
"IMMORTALIS is one of the best comics I've read in a long time and I'm really looking forward to seeing what Frontier's got coming up next."
— Assistant Editor Lia Pelosi

MARVEL HOLIDAY SPECIAL 1993 2.95
With 64 pages by Peter David, Ron Lim, Pat Broderick, Michael Golden, Howard Chaykin, and more. Cover by Michael Kaluta!
"It's always a lot of fun giving creative people the chance to take the holiday stories they've had in the backs of their heads all year and do them. This year's special is a real nondenominational all-star jam!"
— Editor Rene Witternaetter

MARVEL MASTERWORKS #26 34.95
Hardcover re-presenting Thor tales from JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #101-110
"...A great period in the book. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby returned, and got back to the cosmic story lines and Asgardian mythology that made it great."—Editor Tom Brevoort

MARVEL X-MEN TRADING CARD COLLECTION 2.95
The Jim Lee collection on special glossy paper
"It's a unique chance to see Jim Lee's incredible art larger than life."
—Assistant Editor Mindy Newell

MARVELS #1 (of 4) 5.95
48 pages of painted art chronicling the birth of the Marvel universe
"It's 60 years in the making; the heart and soul of the Marvel Universe from a unique, new perspective."
— Editor Marcus McLaurin

PUNISHER HOLIDAY SPECIAL #2 2.95
"It's like getting PUNISHER, WAR JOURNAL and WAR ZONE, all in one issue, with all the excitement."
—Assistant Editor Tim Tuohy

SPIDER-MAN VS. DRACULA 1.75
Re-presenting GIANT-SIZE SPIDER-MAN #1
"It's a classic confrontation: the Spider vs. the Bat. What more could you ask for?"
— Editor Mort Todd

WOLVERINE/GHOST RIDER: ACTS OF VENGEANCE 6.95
The macabre tale from MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS
"It's a great, hard to find story by the classic Ghost Rider team. We're printing it on paper that's slicker than the wheels on Ghostie's bike!"— Editor Richard Ashford

X-MEN ADVENTURES #15 1.25
Giant-sized season finale
"We're very excited about the special 8-page pin-up gallery. It resembles the Professor Xavier files shown at the end of the animated show and it looks great!"
— Editor Kelly Corvese

FIRST WEEK

2099 UNLIMITED #3 3.95
64 pages with the Hulk 2099.

AVENGERS WEST COAST #102 1.25

BIKER MICE FROM MARS #3 1.50
Revealing the origin

CABLE #7 2.00
Is Cable in league with Stryfe?

CAPTAIN AMERICA #423 1.25

CLIVE BARKER'S PINHEAD #2 2.50
Pinhead time-travels to the old west.

DAREDEVIL #324 1.25
"Fall From Grace" part 4 (of 6).

DARK GUARD #4 1.75
Death's Head II battles Collapsar.

DARKHAWK #35 1.25

DEATH DUTY #2 1.95

DIE CUT #3 (of 4) 1.75

GROO THE WANDERER #108 2.25
"Men of the People," part 3 (of 4).

GUN RUNNER #4 (of 6) 1.75

HAWKEYE #1 (of 4) 1.75

MARVEL FRONTIER UNLIMITED #1 2.95

MARVEL MASTERWORKS #26 34.95

MONSTER MENACE #2 (of 4) 1.25
More classic monster tales

MOTORMOUTH & KILLPOWER #3 (of 4) 1.75

NAMOR #46 1.25

NIGHTSTALKERS #15 1.75

NOMAD #21 1.75

ORIGINAL GHOST RIDER #19 1.75

PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #61 2.95

REN & STIMPY #14 1.75
"The Good, the Bad, and the Stimpy."

SACHS & VIOLENS #3 (of 4) 2.25
A dinosaur-clad villain kidnaps children. With bound-in trading card.

SAINT SINNER #4 1.75
An unearthly creature threatens New York.

SCARLET WITCH #1 (of 4) 1.75

SHE-HULK #59 1.75
Shulkie defends her own enemies.

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #15 1.25
The floating city begins to fall.

SPIDER-MAN CLASSIC #10 1.25

STARBLAST #1 2.00

THUNDERSTRIKE #4 1.25

UNCANNY X-MEN #308 1.25
Jean proposes to Scott.

WARHIDE #1 1.95

WARLOCK CHRONICLES #7 2.00

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #108 1.25

SECOND WEEK

ALPHA FLIGHT #128 1.75
Behind the Registration Act

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #385 1.25
Spidey teams-up with the Jury!

BARBIE #37 1.25

CLIVE BARKER'S HARROWERS #2 2.50
Trapped in hell.

CURSE OF THE WEIRD #2 (of 4) 1.25
Pre-comics code horror

DARKHOLD #16 1.75

GHOST RIDER #45 1.75

GHOST RIDER/SPIDER-MAN: SPIRITS OF VENOM 9.95

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #44 1.25

HYPERKIND #5 1.75
The fate of the Paxis

KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF JUSTICE #2 (of 3) 1.25

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #145 1.50

MARVEL X-MEN TRADING CARD COLLECTION #1 2.95

MARVELS #1 4.95

NIGHT THRASHER #6 1.75
Thrash & Rage help the victim of a racial attack.

NOVA #1 2.95

PSYCHONAUTS #4 (of 4) 4.95

PUNISHER WAR ZONE #23 2.95

QUASAR #54 1.25

RAVAGE 2099 #14 1.25
Ravage learns the secret of the floating city.

REMOVAL MAN VS. MOTORMOUTH #1 (of 2) 2.95

ROIDRAGE #2 (of 4) 1.95

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #217 2.25
"Conan the Mercenary" part 1 (of 2).

SECRET DEFENDERS #11 1.75

SILVER SABLE #20 1.25

SLEEPWALKER #32 1.25
Sleepy's origin is fully revealed.

SPIDER-WOMAN #3 (of 4) 1.75

TERRARISTS #3 (of 4) 2.50
The team fights "The Terran Directive." With bound-in trading card.

WILD THING #10 1.75

WOLVERINE #77 1.75

WOLVERINE/GHOST RIDER: ACTS OF VENGEANCE 6.95

WONDER MAN #29 1.25

X-FACTOR #98 1.25

X-MEN ADVENTURES #15 1.25

THIRD WEEK

AVENGERS #370 1.25
Final showdown with the Gatherers

BLAZE #2 (of 4) 1.75
Blaze's wife barely clings to life.

BLOODRUSH #2 (of 4) 1.95

BRATS BIZARRE #3 (of 4) 1.95
The Brats bring down the Hive with a bound-in trading card.

CONAN SAGA #82 2.25

CYBERSPACE 3000 #7 1.75

DEATH'S HEAD GOLD #1 2.95

DOCTOR WHO 1994 YEARBOOK 8.95
64-page deluxe hardcover

DOCTOR WHO #204 4.95

DOOM 2099 #13 1.25

THE EASTER STORY 2.99

ECTOKID #5 1.75
"Sir Sigmoid's Arcadia," part 1 (of 2)

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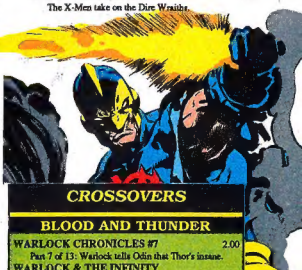

CROSSOVERS

BLOOD AND THUNDER

WARLOCK CHRONICLES #7 2.00
Part 7 of 13: Warlock tells Odin that Thor's insane.

WARLOCK & THE INFINITY WATCH #24 1.75
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ROIDRAGE #2 (of 4) 2.25
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SIEGE OF DARKNESS

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GHOST RIDER #45 1.75
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SECRET DEFENDERS #11 1.75
Part 3 of 12: Dr. Strange prepares for the Starblast.

NAMOR #46 1.75
A *Starblast* tie-in

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	HAPPY BIRTHDAY JIM GALTON 1	HOWIE POST RONNIE BERGER ANN SPAGNOLETTI 2 **ELECTION DAY**	3	4		6
RODNEY RAMOS BARBARA BERRYMAN ANTHONY LeBRON 7	8	BILL MANTLO MORT TODD 9	10	CARL POTTS DAVE COCKRUM 11 **VETERAN'S DAY**	JOEY CAVALIERI 12	DOUG MURRAY 13
JUDITH SOTTILE 14	STU SCHWARTZBERG MATT MORRA 15	JOHN LEWANDOWSKI STACIE DURANTE 16	JEFF SIMONS 17			20
MARK ALEXANDER 21				25 **THANKSGIVING**	KAREN VITALE LIA PELOSI 26	DORREN YIN CHOY 27
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